

MEN AND SPIRITUALITY:  
A STUDY ON GENDER AND SPIRITUALITY AMONG  
SECOND-GENERATION KOREAN AMERICANS

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the Faculty of the  
Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Mark Chung Hearn  
December 2011

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This Dissertation, written by

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under the direction of his Faculty Committee and approved by its members,  
has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

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## ABSTRACT

### MEN AND SPIRITUALITY: A STUDY ON GENDER AND SPIRITUALITY AMONG SECOND-GENERATION KOREAN AMERICANS

Mark Chung Hearn

This dissertation studies second-generation Korean American men through the lens of gender, spirituality, and race. It explores how spirituality affects Korean American men and the inverse, how Korean American men affect their spirituality. Using social construction theory and critical feminist critique, a foundational argument is that Korean American men are in part, products of social, historical, and cultural forces. These forces have produced gender, racial, and religious scripts that manifest in their lived experiences and their held beliefs. In order to understand these scripts, the author has situated Korean American men within the larger social and historical context of the United States. The author asserts that Korean American Christian men and their spirituality exist in a mutually shaping relationship. As spirituality provide men alternative scripts with which to live, social forces as witnessed in lived experience also help to form them. Sometimes these scripts are the same. This interdisciplinary study uses a variety of scholarly literature from several disciplines including Asian American studies, gender and men's studies, spirituality, sociology of religion, sociology of sport, and religious education. It also pulls data from



qualitative research the author conducted—ethnography with a second-generation Korean American church and semi-structured interviews with second-generation Korean American men.

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they were baby-sitting but only caring for their granddaughter, their countless hours of watching our daughter, in addition to the numerous meals they provided my wife and me, allowed me the time and human resources to finish this dissertation and program. Moreover, their sacrifice and work to establish Korean immigrants in this new country was etched indelibly on my heart and mind as a young boy. I believe this was a significant formative experience that instilled within me a strong sense of social work and hospitality and a reason why I chose this dissertation topic. I am deeply thankful for this concrete image.

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support and encouragement through the giving of their own, often self-sacrificing, resources.

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## INTRODUCTION

### A Dearth in Literature

There is great need for a study of second-generation Korean American men.<sup>1</sup> Scholastically, while there has been ample literature written *on* Korean American women *by* Korean American women, the same cannot be said with a gender study of Korean American men, particularly within the context of church, religion, and spirituality. Though men committed to the task of capturing various masculinities are aware of this literature gap, the gap nevertheless exists.<sup>2</sup> I imagine hypotheses abound for why this is. Several available resources on Korean American Christianity and Korean American women and religion, highlight gender and the effects of patriarchy.<sup>3</sup> Understandably, this is a much needed effort due to the power differential experienced by women in Korean American society and the abuse that occurs within domestic households. In such cases, Korean American women have

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<sup>1</sup> Because it is cumbersome to read and write "second-generation Korean American" for each instance, I will hereafter use "Korean American" to denote second-generation Korean American persons. I will explicitly note a demarcation of generations when necessary.

<sup>2</sup> Philip L. Culbertson, ed. *The Spirituality of Men: Sixteen Christians Write about Their Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> For a few examples of gender and patriarchy, see Antony W. Alumkal, "Preserving Patriarchy: Assimilation, Gender Norms, and Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals," *Qualitative Sociology* 22, no. 2 (1999): 127-40; Kelly H. Chong, "What It Means To Be Christian: The Role of Religion in the Construction of Ethnic Identity and Boundary among Second-Generation Korean Americans," *Sociology of Religion* 59, no. 3 (1998): 259-86; Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers: Korean-American Women and the Church* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2002).

difficulty being seen as fully human in institutions such as work, home, and church. From casual conversations to scholarly forums with Korean American women, the message of hurt, anger, disappointment and resistance to patriarchy rings clearly and loudly in the voices of women.

Where then are the voices of men that speak to issues of gender and patriarchy? As a Korean American male committed to theological reflection and the work of the church from a profeminist stance, I find it perplexing that it is the women who do much of this work; the voices of men are largely void and silent in their writing.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps one of the reasons Korean American men (myself included) have not done this work is because they are not comfortable enough in their masculinities, social standing, or “in their own skin.” A work such as this may call their masculinity and manhood further into question. Moreover, my work with second-generation Korean American men also reveals that they swim in a sea of ambiguity when it comes to manhood and

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<sup>4</sup> I have yet to come across a work by a Korean American male author that substantially addresses the issue of patriarchy and gender among Korean Americans while there are significant examples of women scholars doing so as noted in the previous footnote. One Korean American male scholar who does address the issue of patriarchy briefly is Andrew Sung Park as he theologically discusses the effects of patriarchy in relation to the Korean concept of *han*. One other Asian American male scholar who has worked on issues of gender and patriarchy particularly as these relate to religion is Antony W. Alumkal. These two however are clearly the exception rather than the rule. See Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); Antony W. Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches: Race, Ethnicity, and Assimilation in the Second Generation* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, LLC, 2003).

masculinities.<sup>5</sup> That is, though I argue that many Korean American men have ideas of what manhood should be—mostly patterned after white hegemonic masculinity<sup>6</sup>—contemporary contexts and experiences (e.g., gender discourse in the public arena, marriage) question traditional notions many men have long held. The questioning is not so much the issue for Korean American men as it is the questioning in the midst of socially-constructed realities that disempower and leave them with a loss of self and meaning. While they, as other men, try to understand what it means to be a man in society, they do so unlike other males (particularly white) on account of interlocking issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, etc. that place Asian American males in different social loci. By studying the ambiguity and loss of Korean American men, we can perhaps get a glimpse of the difficulty and discomfort men may feel about broaching issues of gender and patriarchy. Critical studies are not politically free endeavors as they serve prophetic roles but do so in deconstructive ways that often carry a price calling for change. However, the maintenance of status quo is neither politically free as it serves to continue existing structures.

As a practitioner, there is great need for a study on Korean American men because men need healing. The stories of the men with whom I had the privilege of observing and interviewing reveal their pain, loss, and

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<sup>5</sup> I have worked, in particular, the past ten years with second-generation Korean Americans (including boys and men) in various church groups and in leadership conferences.

<sup>6</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 77.

disappointment. They carry great *han*, the unresolved angst, bitterness, and disappointment of which Andrew Sung Park writes.<sup>7</sup> Korean American communities also need the healing of Korean American men. This issue is not simply a personal and individual one but also a systemic one. The healing of Korean American men assists in the healing of their communities—families, relationships, and churches. I contend that as Korean American men are studied and understood through a social constructionist frame, their healing is made more possible.

### Methodology

To write this interdisciplinary study, I pull from several scholarly disciplines including Asian American studies, gender studies, sociology of religion, sociology of sport, spirituality, and religious education. Moreover, I use data from qualitative research I conducted including ethnography and semi-structured interviews. I conducted ethnographic research for three months during the Winter-Spring months of 2011 at a second-generation Korean American church in southern California (“Christ Church”)<sup>8</sup> observing in particular, spirituality, race, and gender. In addition to attending two different Sunday worship services weekly over the three-month duration, I visited Bible studies, small groups, prayer meetings, Sunday School classes, a staff meeting and had numerous fellowship outings with various families and

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<sup>7</sup> Park, *Wounded Heart of God*.

<sup>8</sup> All names have been given pseudonyms.

groups both on weekends and during weekdays. I kept field notes with detailed information particularly of the services, but also kept notes of various gatherings including Bible studies and small groups where I thought note-taking would not become a distraction to the overall flow and conversations of those meetings. Additionally I kept personal reflections of my observations particularly noting my emotions, reflections, and internal responses. In cases where I was introduced as a researcher, I tried to keep my writing to a minimum only later to write down my observations and reflections. In instances where I was not introduced as a researcher, I sought to participate in the flow of dialogue so as to not feel like an outsider but also felt free enough to scribble notes occasionally that I would return to when I later wrote up my notes in detail. I left the discretion of revealing my identity to the leader of each group and did not make this a pressing matter for several reasons. First, I obtained a written informed consent to study the life of the church by the senior pastor of the English-speaking ministry thus providing me access to all of the ministries as far as it would help my research.<sup>9</sup> Keeping this generosity in mind, I did not include in my dissertation information concerning any specific person who did not sign a consent form, without having run it by them first. Second, I had obtained permission by the group leader to join the group and had asked each leader prior to the beginning of each meeting to see if they wanted to introduce me as a researcher. I left it to the leader's discretion to

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A.



make this call for I felt that the leader would understand the pulse of the group best and I did not want to detract from what she or he was trying to accomplish through that meeting. Third, where I was either introduced as “Mark Hearn” or given no introduction at all, I was encouraged to participate in the course of dialogue. Therefore, I tried to write less and participate more in the flow of conversation only to write my observations afterwards in greater detail. Finally, because of my dual identity of researcher and church member/leader, what Mary Clark Moschella calls the “pastoral researcher,” the majority of the people knew me and viewed me as a church member participating in the group.<sup>10</sup> On account of this hybrid identity, I tried to keep the integrity of the gathering intact by trying not to wear my researcher hat too conspicuously.

While Sara Delamont argues that actual participation does not necessitate the “participant” in “participant observation,”<sup>11</sup> I found that my active participation at both the macro and micro levels of the life of the church not only provided a deeper understanding and appreciation of Korean American Christians, but further established any rapport I had built up and any credibility the community had already given me due to my own membership and leadership in the church. I believe this type of active involvement more quickly enhanced my access to deeper conversations with the men I

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 14.

<sup>11</sup> Sara Delamont, “Ethnography and Participant Observation,” in *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium, and David Silverman (London: Sage Publications, 2007).

interviewed than if I was an outsider due to the trust that had already been established. Macro-level participation included for example, the leading of two different ministries at the church including the football ministry (Chapter 4) and the ministry to men (Chapter 6). Micro-level participation included anywhere from sharing meals and conversations during the fellowship hour after services to participating on the worship team.

In addition to the ethnography I conducted at Christ Church, I also conducted participant observation of a second-generation Korean American church football tournament in March 2011. Having played in these tournaments for over five years, I noticed certain patterns of masculinity, particularly hypermasculinity, among many of the participating men. Various episodes of violence and aggression I had either witnessed first-hand or heard second-hand piqued enough of my interest to include it as a dissertation chapter because in a sense, it captured in concrete image the idea that Korean American males are complex beings whose lived experiences in physical bodies are often the products of great socializing forces such as the media, sports, and spirituality. The observance that these tournaments exhibited so much violence and aggression and yet were church-sponsored events that began with worship was both a cognitively perplexing and fascinating phenomena. It led me to ask several questions regarding how Korean American men function in society and why the need to posture so intensely among other Korean American men and fellow churches.

Furthermore, I wondered what is and how does spirituality function in these tournaments, especially in light of Sandra Schneider's definition of spirituality as a person's purposeful integration towards one's beliefs of ultimate value.<sup>12</sup> Assuming that many of these men confess to some measure Christ-likeness and Christian maturity (as manifested in traits such as humility) as the highest purpose and value of Christianity, there appears a need for another explanation besides one's spiritual commitments to elucidate why many hold themselves the way they do at these tournaments. On account of these questions, I approached and received consent (see Appendix C) from the organizer of the annual spring "Fruit of the Spirit Bowl" (FOTS) football tournament to formally observe it. Additionally, I participated as a player in the tournament with Christ Church. On the one hand, while I was limited in my ability to see every game due to my own playing and the fact that there were two fields running games concurrently, on the other hand, I was able to experience first-hand the spectrum of emotions and the competitive intensity from a player's and not simply an observer's perspective. I recorded my field notes and reflections from the tournament sparsely throughout the day, but made more detailed notes following the event. I compared these notes with those from my interviews of research partners who have participated in FOTS.

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<sup>12</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum," *Spiritus* 3, no. 2 (2003): 163-85; and "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Furthermore, I also compared it with any informal conversations I had with persons at Christ Church who, while having not participated in the tournament, have observed it and have offered any unsolicited feedback on the tournament.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of listening to fifteen different men respond to two broad topics of questions consisting of masculinity and spirituality: (1) What is a symbol of masculinity to you and why? What influences this understanding? and (2) What is spirituality to you? What forms does it take? What influences this understanding? In addition to these two broad topics, I asked questions related to race, family background, their own families, dating, and their involvement in church sports tournaments. I did not ask each of these subsidiary questions to the all of the research participants<sup>13</sup> but posed these when I discerned appropriate moments to ask them. Finally, I asked a last question to every person concerning what they would say about masculinity and manhood to the generations of boys and men who were to follow them. I found this to be a way for the men to feel a sense of contributing positively to persons beyond themselves and also to having some sense of ownership of the interview, if not the whole project. Furthermore it helped concretize their thoughts of masculinity in the form of wisdom-giving, an act I

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<sup>13</sup> I follow Mary Clark Moschella's encouragement to ethnographic researchers to refer to their interviewees as "research partners" because of the mutual dynamic the pastoral researcher should strive for and less of the research "subject" of more traditional approaches. See Moschella, 87-89.

hoped to be significant considering that one of the issues for many of these men focused upon a lack of validation in their manhood and adulthood by significant adults in their lives. Since many offered in their interview that wisdom-giving was often the act of their fathers and therefore a characteristic of masculinity, I thought that concluding the interviews in this way would help to serve as a type of ritual or rite of passage as small as it may have been. My hope is that it would have given them a measure of validation that they too were adults who would be looked upon to pass on wisdom.

The interview was semi-structured in that while I hoped to hear the men's reflections of the two broad categories I asked them to prepare prior to the interview, once the interview began, it took on the dynamic of creating a narrative together. I mostly listened to them sharing parts of their life stories while asking either clarifying or probing questions about a statement or thought they made.<sup>14</sup> There were times of laughter, joking, and crying that we both shared together. I was trying to hold in tension, listening to the research partners' stories with the need to explore the questions of my research project while being mindful of skewing any responses. This was not always an easy task as some of the topics I raised were of little concern to the research partner. However after listening to the first interviews several times, I shifted questions in later interviews to help men reflect on topics in different ways.

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<sup>14</sup> Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008), 23-27.

The following example on a discussion about race in the workplace helps to highlight this shift:

Mark: How is [it] working as a Korean male or as an Asian male in corporate America for you? What was that experience like?

Rodney: Umm, I wouldn't say it's...at least my experience wasn't terribly unique or different from any other, you know, say a white guy. I think at least in this day and age we [Asians] are so much more common than before. Yeah, so I can't say that I was treated uniquely or differently because of who I am.

Mark: Who were your bosses, racially and gender speaking?

Rodney: Actually I think that's an interesting question. One of them...I have had a few jobs...I bounced around. Two of them have been white women. I've only worked with one man, a white male. And working with the women yeah was great. They bring their own stuff as boss. The male I worked with was kind of a unique situation because he was kind of a...yeah, jerk. And he had that reputation kind of...I think not only to me, actually I felt like he almost treated me better compared to a white coworker I had.

Mark: A male coworker?

Rodney: Another white male coworker I had. But I think that had nothing to do with our races because I was a better worker. I put out a better product than he did.

Mark: So you don't think anything would've been different if your boss was not a white male, if say he was an Indian male? No difference, it's just individual personality?

Rodney: Yeah he was just...yeah I've never had the opportunity to work with another fellow, or work for an Asian male. I don't know maybe it would be different. Actually I take that back. I did have a brief...actually it was an Asian woman that I worked for. I briefly worked for a Korean company. And that is its own....

Mark: And how was that?

Rodney: It's not good (Mark-laughter). They were very...pretty traditional Korean company it turns out.

Mark: Even your boss who was a Korean woman?

Rodney: Yeah she had her own set of issues because I think being a woman supervisor in this, more of a male industry...she definitely had her own kind of chip on her shoulder too.

Notice that while my initial question to Rodney inquiring how it is to work as a Korean male in corporate America yielded little discussion about race, my follow-up questions gave him more specific situations to think about race in the workplace. He eventually brought in the gender piece and while not really seeing race as an issue initially, came to a place where he thought that it might be an issue. While I did not push the topic thereafter with him, I did press it the little I did because of what previous research participants had said in addition to his own statement that “actually, that’s an interesting question.” The point is that I had to constantly negotiate within the course of the interviews what and how I would ask and press issues as the interviews took on a dance between the research partners and me.

I gathered my sampling of research partners through purposeful selection for several reasons.<sup>15</sup> First, due to the nature of the study, I needed to explore second-generation Korean American men and their lives. I delimited the age range from roughly twenty-two to forty years old because I wanted to explore issues of masculinity and manhood with men who had experienced life beyond high school and mostly college. Technically, a fourteen year-old

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 45-46.

Korean male who was born in the United States to immigrant parents is of the second generation. However, I wanted to explore this constituency in certain social settings and at more mature life stages. Second, I chose to interview men from the same church I conducted my ethnography because it helped give me more in-depth information about my observations. Third, I chose this group of men because they were a group, for the most part, with whom I had extensive exposure; I already had established rapport with these men. Fourth, my role and identity was one where most of the men saw me as some type of mentor or pastor if not leader to them and to the rest of our church. For the sake of time and resources, I thought this would help focus my time on in-depth exploration while spending as little time as possible on establishing access and gathering initial information. I therefore initially asked three men individually who had participated in the men's ministry and who fit the criteria of the project, inviting them to an hour-long interview. The initial three I interviewed began a four-month long duration of conducting interviews, transcription, and analysis. As I listened and transcribed this first set of interviews over two and a half months, I eventually communicated via e-mail to the other men in the ministry soliciting their participation. I stated the intent of my project and was able to secure interviews from another twelve men over a period of a month and a half. Prior to the interview, I sent them the informed consent which contained more detailed information concerning the project (see Appendix B). I conducted the majority of the interviews at church (one



was at his home) as it provided space that was relatively quiet and assured protection of their anonymity. While I did not share names of the men I would interview nor that I was conducting interviews (outside of the pastor of the church and the men who I had solicited), many of the men freely offered that information to each other or in the midst of others who were not a part of the interview process. The interviews lasted anywhere from just under one hour to an hour and a half. After the initial set of interviews, I realized that giving the men a mental map of the interview prior to its recording might be beneficial to them. Therefore I told each research partner that I would ask an initial question regarding their background and then eventually move into the two broad topics. I informed them that I would play off of their answers and that it would be a conversation in this respect. I would transition to a new topic of conversation when I saw appropriate endings and openings. Only one research partner made a comment a few days after his interview regarding the format of the interview stating that he thought it was going to be more of a “back and forth conversation” between him and me as we discussed the topic at hand. Of his own admittance, he also said that he “should have looked at the questions more carefully” and “should have reflected on them a little more” perhaps giving a clue as to why he was hoping that it was going to be more of a back and forth conversation.

While I felt I had established rapport among all of the men prior to the interviews, I still sensed an initial feeling out process from most of them in the

interviews. I reason this was due to the procedural uncertainty of the interview and less about the overall project itself since they all agreed and seemed eager to assist the project. Furthermore because I am seen as any one of older brother, adult figure, or the one in a doctoral program (i.e., the one with expertise knowledge) coupled with the cultural value of giving respect to older males in Confucian societies, there may have existed the dynamic of needing to answer the questions in a “right” manner as if there was a correct response or an answer to each question, especially since a main topic of inquiry was spirituality and many of these men had grown up in Christian Sunday schools learning to memorize the right answers and correct doctrine.<sup>16</sup> Others might have played off of my responses, facial expressions, and body language since I tried to present more of an even-keeled, listening presence. This approach may have thrown some for a loop by communicating more of a formal and serious side of me than the more commonplace informal and conversational style I have with them on a weekly basis. Several of the younger men repeatedly finished their answers with “Does this answer your question?” or some form of it, conveying to me a bit of uncertainty with their responses to open-ended questions that sought to explore their thoughts on various issues. An example of this lack of self-confidence is found with Jimmy who shared that his lack of self-confidence often showed up in his classes:

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<sup>16</sup> This has been shared with me in informal conversations by several research partners.

Numerous times where I [raised] my hand in class or on a project and I think [I have the right answer] and [my] answer is right, the [professor] would pull me aside and say, “You know the right answer but how come you didn’t have more confidence?” And I was like, “Well I wasn’t really sure. I had a feeling and I thought it was right but...” Numerous times that has happened but I just can’t get over that hurdle of being self-confident [enough] to provide a solid answer. Maybe because I’ve seen other coworkers or classmates...get burned where they were positive it was a certain answer and that wasn’t the case. And I didn’t want to be that guy who was in that situation.<sup>17</sup>

The initial apprehension I sensed appeared to dissipate for some as we moved through the interview and they detected that they could really speak their mind and that I wasn’t there to judge or evaluate them. I noticed phrases such as “We’re being honest here right?” or “So to be honest with you” that prefaced some of the men’s responses and a change in vulnerability with me. Others spoke more honestly when they could express more crudely and openly, such as when Ken tacked on at the end of his elaborate answer to his initial symbol of masculinity, “But honestly the first thing that came to my mind was a big penis. Yeah I thought, well a big penis is a sign of masculinity, a universal sign of manhood.”<sup>18</sup> This evolved into Ken offering his thoughts on phallus size and societal norms of masculinity, particularly the influential nature of pornography and media on this stereotype. Tony’s “pardon my French”<sup>19</sup> set-up to use a curse word helped to bring about an authenticity to our time together that helped me experience a measure of his emotion despite

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<sup>17</sup> Interview #10

<sup>18</sup> Interview #4

<sup>19</sup> Interview #12

conducting the interview in a church setting. Lastly, some of the questions posed appeared to open up a measure of vulnerability that was rich for our discussion. Abe exhibited great vulnerability and sensitivity during a particular point in our interview. I have added the non-verbal expressions to get a sense of the dynamic between us:

Mark: So, you know you said something earlier and I wanted to ask you this question. When we were talking about manhood, when did you feel like you became a man or at least an adult?

Abe: More recently (chuckle)...But I think even until just recently, things have finally clicked...you know like I really treat my parents bad sometimes and I feel like more recently I figured out why. I figured out that no matter whatever they did to me or what I feel like they did to me, they did their best. I feel like it's my responsibility to change that, to change my own thinking and then change them for the future...I can sit here and say, "Oh that's not a problem, that's not a problem," but that's just my pride speaking. I feel like (getting choked up)...I feel like it's (holding back tears)...it's hard realizing (crying)...and expressing your love to parents because you love them but there's stuff that you went through as a child that affect your life. But I realize that I've hurt them a lot...like, almost until I was [well into my thirties]; I feel like I'm a man now.<sup>20</sup>

Following the interviews, I transcribed each of the interviews on my own using a combination of a voice-recognition software program and typing with a word processor. I tried to keep the originality of the interviews by keeping filler words such as "um" "yeah" "uh" "you know" etc., but edited these for the dissertation where I saw that it became redundant and was not a factor in the thematic or discourse analyses. Following the transcribing, I made an initial open coding of the transcript and then sent these transcripts back to the

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<sup>20</sup> Interview #14

research partners to read and edit it. After returning the coded transcripts, I went back to the transcripts and focused upon thematic analysis of the codes. After this level of analyses, I then began to cross-analyze the interviews and sift out major themes of congruence. I looked for any deviation of responses and analyzed these thematically. Lastly I incorporated relevant findings from the interviews into the body of this dissertation.

Though one might question the relative shortness of the duration of my ethnographic observations, I have attended this church for over six years and have gained both rapport and access to many conversations and insights I likely would not have been exposed to in a three-month period at a new church. My status as the designated Lay Leader lends credibility to my status in the church and hopefully, to the trustworthiness of my research. In some sense, my observations have occurred not only within this three-month period but have transpired over the last six years. I have limited myself to these three months due to time and resource constraints. On account of my leadership roles within this church, I use Moschella's book on pastoral care and ethnography as a guide for my research.<sup>21</sup> One critique of my methodology that I anticipate consists of the reality that I might be too immersed in my own context and thus unable to observe it objectively. Perhaps I have gone "native" of which many ethnographers and anthropologists speak. To this I respond by saying that I do not claim objectivity as a positivist would, but understand as

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<sup>21</sup> Moschella, *Ethnography*.

does the interpretivist, that my observations and interpretations are biased. This community has been my life for six years and the larger Korean American Christian community for much longer. While being cautious, I choose to see this as a positive and not as a detriment as I am able to wade through initial levels of observation to more critical levels of analyses and thought more quickly. These have been questions and observations brewing in me for quite some time. As one interviewee remarked following the end of our time together as he asked further clarifying details about the project, "You're the right person for this with all of your combination of skills and education. I can't think of anybody else who would be better for this."<sup>22</sup>

I however have taken measures to provide a more credible reading of this group of Korean American men through various means. After transcribing and performing first-level coding of each of the interviews, I sent these back to each of the interviewees to member-check the transcription and initial coding. They returned these with either some revisions or clarifications or mostly no revisions at all having agreed and confirmed my interpretation. I also provided a copy of the second draft to the research partners, the pastor of Christ Church, and the organizer of the church football tournament I observed, giving them opportunity for any feedback. On account of the agreement to be the only person (other than the interviewee) who would have access to the audio recordings of the interviews and the written transcripts, in addition to keeping

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<sup>22</sup> Interview #10

their identity anonymous, I did not have a third party transcribe the interviews or perform any coding of the transcript. I triangulated my interpretations with interdisciplinary studies from relevant fields (e.g., Sharon Kim's study on Korean American churches and their spirituality) to give me alternate empirical and theoretical voices with which to compare my own study.<sup>23</sup>

### Limitations

There are a number of limitations to my research and cause for further study in this area. I was unable to address many of these in my dissertation due to my own limitations of resources. First, a lengthening of the duration of my ethnography may yield other insights and observations. Second, studying other Korean American churches and opening up the sampling to a broader constituency would assist cross-comparison analysis. Third, adding follow-up interviews would help to clarify and more accurately interpret the content of the men's responses. Fourth, interviewing Korean American men from other churches and outside of churches would also help with comparative analysis. Likewise, interviewing Korean American women and their interpretations of Korean American men would be fascinating as it would help to give a broader interpretation particularly of gender construction and how Korean American women see Korean American men. Finally, interviews with Asian American

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<sup>23</sup> Sharon Kim, *A Faith of Our Own: Second-Generation Spirituality in Korean American Churches* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

men in particular and men (and women) of other races would also be an intriguing comparative study particularly in light of the argument I make for the social construction of Korean men in the United States. With this said, I do not attempt to generalize my study for all second-generation Korean American men. This is one church and one group of men. I understand that the limitations of this study provide another opportunity to explore in depth more a population that has been under-researched. My hope is that this research spurs scholars and practitioners to further study and work with Korean American men.

#### Socially Locating the Author, Reflexivity, and Reasons for This Study

Using critical feminist theory as a methodological lens calls me to identify my own social location and context. I am a second-generation, heterosexual Korean American male in his late thirties and am married with one daughter. While my last name does not appear to have any Asian roots, both of my parents are full Korean. My father changed his family name from a potential English translation of “Han” to “Hearn” primarily because he did not like the idea of people pronouncing his name with a short “a” as in the word *hand*. Furthermore, because he immigrated during the second wave of Korean immigration (1955) before most Koreans came and not too long after World War II, a spelling of “Hahn”—the way many Germans had transliterated their names—was a route he chose against. Finally, as a secondary reason,



thinking progressively, he changed the name so there would be no trace (at least on paper) of his Asian heritage and thus any reason to discriminate against him or his future family. For similar reasons, my parents did not force the children to learn the Korean language for they did not want us to grow up with an Asian-sounding accent and thus prohibit us from being viewed highly in any communicative interview such as a phone interview.<sup>24</sup>

I grew up in a household full of strong personalities that often clashed. Both of my parents were strong in their own ways. My father's strong personality often came by establishing his will throughout the family, whereas I witnessed my mother's through her resilience. Both of my two older sisters had equally and uniquely strong personalities. They had a large hand in shaping the profeminist lens I now carry today.

I attend a second-generation Korean American Christian church and have done so for the last six years. Prior to this, I worked as a locally-licensed minister in various Korean American and Caucasian churches, working with persons of diverse ages and races. My wife and I co-served one of these churches together with equal responsibility and status which I imagine was a

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<sup>24</sup> According to my oldest sister, our mother apparently tells a slightly different story about why we were never forced to learn the Korean language. After a rough day early in her childhood schooling, my sister came home crying and told my parents that if she had to use "those words" [Korean] "over there" [school] anymore, she didn't want to go back. She was made fun of by her classmates for speaking Korean (early 1970s). Faced with the dilemma of having to choose between their child learning the language (culture) and having an interest in school (education), they chose the latter at the expense of the former.

situation most Korean Americans had never seen due to the strictness of gender roles and spiritual authority as I argue in Chapter 3. My roles in these churches included preaching and teaching, but also included contemporary worship leading, mentoring, and pastoral counseling.

I have had a variety of theological and spiritual experiences that have spanned a spectrum of Christianity including more theologically and socially conservative denominations (Nazarene and Christian Missionary and Alliance) to more middle-of-the-road ones (United Methodist). Furthermore, I have experienced a range of spiritual expression including charismatic and “the slaying of the spirit” (Pentecostal and Vineyard churches), high liturgical forms in mainline churches, and more contemplative and Catholic spirituality in figures such as Brother Lawrence, Teresa of Avila, and Henri Nouwen and having found much spiritual rejuvenation at Catholic retreat centers such as Gethsemane, made famous by the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton.

I am educated having received the Bachelor of Arts degree, two Masters degrees in Divinity and Theological Studies, and am currently working on the Doctorate of Philosophy. I have attended conservative Protestant, mainline, and interreligious educational institutions that have shaped not only my theological constructs but have exposed me to a range of racial, cultural, and philosophical differences.

Lastly, in addition to my academic and church careers, I have worked in the field of athletics and coaching. I grew up playing sports, having started T-

ball at the age of three. I competed in sports from an early age on into high school including baseball, tackle football, basketball, and volleyball. After graduation from college, I began coaching collegiate women's volleyball. This would begin a ten-year journey of coaching women's collegiate and high school volleyball.

Given part of my social location and life context, it may come as no surprise that I write such a study and organize it the way that I do. My growing interest in second-generation Korean Americans, particularly men, is the byproduct of many of these factors. During one of my graduate programs, I had the opportunity to study an organization in the Chicago area by the name of KANWIN, which stands for Korean American Women in Need. It is a non-profit organization that serves as a shelter and social center for abused Korean American women and their children. As I studied this organization and the services they provide, two reflections arose for me. First, I was moved at how Korean Americans were setting up organizations for important issues such as domestic violence. Second, I noted that at least at this organization, advocacy work was done solely by women and outside of the doors of the Korean American church, though many of the women involved were Christians who attended Korean American churches. As I spoke with one of the workers, she said that many of the Korean American churches saw the organization as a "home wrecker."

I began to work with Korean American men in response to the many observations I had about the silence of men and the Korean American church on issues that many female Korean American practitioners and scholars raised and addressed. “Where were the men?” I asked, for I reasoned that a mutual partnership in addressing Korean American issues would be ideal if we men were aware of our cultural privilege and power. I believed that if men hold much of the explicit power in Korean American families and communities, then a work towards wholeness would also have to engage men. Korean American women could continue to do this work, but would continue to be cast as the “liberal” women, the “feminazi,” or the “home wrecker”<sup>25</sup> by those who largely hold patriarchal ideologies.

As a practitioner, my observations at the church sports tournaments were another catalyst for this study. As I watched and participated in these tournaments, in the back of my mind I replayed perhaps a prophetic word from a Korean American woman, “Korean American men just don’t seem comfortable in their skin. Korean men from Korea appear a lot more comfortable in their masculinity than do Korean men here in America.”

A funny thing occurred however as I began to work with men. As I share in the final chapter, my work with a men’s group exposed me to their stories. I began to see and hear their (and my) humanity and brokenness as

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<sup>25</sup> These are just a few of the labels I have heard personally used by men and women to describe people committed to this ideology and work.

they shared about painful relationships, loneliness, and confusion about who they are and who they were growing up. An Asian American counselor who also worked for several years as an InterVarsity staff person at a prestigious Midwestern university, once shared with me the reflection that among the Asian American men he has worked with, he saw a pattern occurring uniquely among the Korean American men. He noticed that somewhere near their late twenties and early thirties, many Korean American men could not “hold [their lives] together anymore” and were in essence, combusting and falling apart. Several of the men showed great emotion in our interviews choking up, tearing up, deeply sighing, and crying as they recounted both painful portions of their life stories and new, hopeful revelations to which they had come. These are grown men from their early-twenties to their late thirties that have carried and still carry much internal conflict. I found myself tearing up with these men throughout the interviews and later crying when I went back and listened to the interviews, for their stories touched deep parts of my own life and journey of masculinity and manhood.

It would be remiss however to paint a portrait of these Korean American men as simply pained and broken. Several of them offered glimpses of their experiences that are hopeful for a renewed understanding and interest in one’s internal healing, social relationships, and life. Furthermore, by observing the humanity and social construction of second-generation Korean American men, I am not advocating for their pardon from the responsibility of any

destruction they too have caused. They have and continue to contribute to the pain of many including their own selves. I do take seriously the feminist ideology of freedom from oppression for *all*. I believe that as Korean American men work on the healing of their issues, they are in essence, working on becoming whole human beings that can better relate to women, to other men, and to themselves. As I heard from several of them, they have begun this journey towards freedom and wholeness claiming responsibility for the destruction in their lives and the lives of others.

### Organization of Chapters

Chapter 1 argues that the use of a social construction frame helps to better understand Korean American men. I begin to make this case by providing a brief history of Koreans in the United States, surveying the early history of Asian immigration to the United States. Retelling the history of Asians and Koreans in the United States begins to identify some of the social structures Asian Americans and Korean Americans have faced. I argue these structures produce racial and gender scripts that shape acceptable definitions of masculinity for Korean men in America.

Chapter 2 addresses the issue of gender. I contend—as do social constructionist approaches—that gender is performance. That is, as biological anatomy determines a person's sex, one's actions mark one's gender. A boy is a male on account of sex but becomes a man due to his performance within

societal definitions and norms of manhood. Furthermore, I use critical feminist theory to argue that gender needs to be viewed in interlocking fashion with other constructions including race and ethnicity. This approach reveals that not all marginalized men share the same social location but instead find themselves among different places along a social hierarchy. I argue that on account of gender and race, Asian American men are at a unique social disadvantage. Yet, while Korean American men experience social disadvantage, patriarchy as it is experienced in Confucian society simultaneously gives men privileged status in private and public spheres such as the home and church.

Chapter 3 shifts from gender construction and masculinity to explore Korean American Christianity and spirituality. I review sociological literature of Korean American Christianity to identify the role and significance of the Church in the lives of Korean Americans. I also explore Korean American spirituality, building a case that shamanism in Korean culture and social philosophy compares with Evangelicalism and its forms of spiritual expression, therefore drawing Korean Americans to Evangelical spiritual practices and theology. I conclude the chapter noting the similarities between gender construction of Evangelical spirituality and Korean American spirituality. I argue that through a critical feminist lens, the second-generation Korean American Christianity compares both with the first generation and with

Evangelicalism on issues of gender and is therefore a construct that should be addressed where it becomes limiting for not only women, but also for men.

Chapter 4 looks at Korean American gender construction and performance through the world of contemporary sport and church athletic tournaments. I turn to the discipline of the sociology of sport to argue that contemporary sport is a complex site of meaning and value. It is more than a place for physical activity, athletic exercise, and competition. It is a site of intense commodification and production of the social meaning of masculinity. It is through this analytical frame that Korean American men's gender performance is better understood. I contend that an exploration of the world of Korean American church sports in the greater Los Angeles area reveals that while Korean American spirituality shapes gender performance, contemporary sport also shapes Korean American men's notions of gender and therefore may indicate one's true spiritual values and commitments.

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a look at the men's group at Christ Church as an example of religious education and spiritual formation for Korean American men. I integrate thick description with theories of religious education and theology in order to understand the reasoning and processes that took place to form this group. I offer suggestions for religious educators and leaders who plan to work with Korean American men, and include a sampling of issues I see pertinent among them. I also offer an initial discussion of the implications this study has for churches. My hope is to offer this model



as a launching point for further scholarly study in addition to providing a creative and imaginative curriculum of religious education for the practitioner who seeks to work with men in various institutions.

I want to add a final word on the organization of the study. Because this study aims to incorporate empirical data with prior scholarly research and theory, I have chosen to integrate the data from the study within the body of each chapter instead of adding a stand-alone chapter of "Research Findings." My hope is that this approach provides a better-flowing and more enjoyable read.

## CHAPTER 1

### SITUATING KOREAN AMERICAN MEN IN ASIAN AMERICA

#### A Social Construction Lens

Social construction theory argues that a person is a socially-constructed being. That is, a person makes meaning and can only be understood within a social web of fabricated meaning.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing of essence to a person simply because she or he is human. It is only in relation to others that meaning is created. A person exists not only in physical form marked by visible characteristics such as skin color, facial shape, and hair texture, but more importantly, it is what society confers upon these that is significant. Though physical identifiers are noteworthy, advocates of this theory argue that the social interactions and the ensuing meanings surrounding these physical markers are of highest importance. A black and white car with red flashing lights is only significant on account of the social interactions, attitudes and understanding concerning police cars, police officers and the law. A metal car with flashing lights now has meaning as it is understood within that specific locale. Social construction theorists therefore contend that meaning is created only within the context of shared understanding and interaction.

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<sup>1</sup> Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 1995); Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

Drawing largely from poststructuralism, social construction theory maintains that meanings vary and shift depending upon the particular social and historical context. For example, Jews and Italians were initially viewed as distinct from Anglo-Americans during their initial immigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. These two groups however have successfully achieved whiteness by distinguishing themselves from African Americans.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the racial status of the Chinese in the Mississippi Delta region changed from near Black to near White.<sup>3</sup> Recruited as agricultural labor to the region as early as 1869, the Chinese were initially viewed as almost Black. However, their ascent to work that paralleled Whites thrust them into a category at the other end of the spectrum, that of almost White. Even into the 1930s and 1940s, the racial status of the Mississippi Chinese continued to change as they were viewed as neither White nor Black.

While poststructuralism is a logical outcome of social construction theory, I do not argue as poststructuralists do for an anti-essentialist view of humanity. Neither do I contend that human beings are simply socially-

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<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean, "Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification: The Asian American Experience and Implications for Changing Color Lines," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 386.

<sup>3</sup> James W. Loewen, *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1-2.

constructed sites of meaning.<sup>4</sup> I reason against this on account of a theological claim that considers the *Imago Dei*. The *Imago Dei* construction asserts that all humanity and creation bear the image of its creator and thus carry with them qualities and aspects that reflect something of God. While there is much debate as to what this semblance actually is, adherents to this theological commitment agree that every person has “it” regardless the quality or quantity of interaction with others.<sup>5</sup> Much to the chagrin of the social constructionist, persons are born with the *Imago Dei*.

I do however employ a basic premise of social construction theory (i.e., human beings interact with their social environment, help form it, and make meaning according to these forms) to analyze Korean American men. The social, historical, and cultural processes and contexts facing Korean American men carry influential power that shapes who they are and how they live in society. These influences include institutions such as the home, work, school, and religion but also include media, recreation, and corporate history among other facets of social life.<sup>6</sup> Keeping this in mind, I now turn to the interdisciplinary field of Asian American studies in order to situate Korean

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<sup>4</sup> Burr, *Introduction*, 39-40; Nicola Gavey, "Feminist Poststructuralism and Discourse Analysis," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1989): 495-75.

<sup>5</sup> W. Sibley Towner, "Clones of God," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no. 4 (2005): 341-56.

<sup>6</sup> Jay Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 9th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2007), 33.

American men in context and thus, better understand who they are and what issues they face.

### A Brief Historical Survey of Early Asian America (1852-1910)<sup>7</sup>

#### *To Hawaii*

While no clear historical records remain, speculation abounds that Filipinos and Chinese migrated as early as the sixteenth century to particular regions in present-day Mexico. Some of these earliest Asians eventually landed in the bay area at the southern tip of Louisiana.<sup>8</sup> While the earliest date of migration is debatable, history records of the Hawaiian Islands provide a more accurate account. American businessmen recruited in 1852, one hundred and ninety-five Chinese laborers from the Fujian province to work contractually on the plantations, quickly-expanding business sites that needed a substantial workforce.<sup>9</sup> American businessmen turned to recruitment in part because the native population rapidly decreased on account of their exposure

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<sup>7</sup> I highlight two points with the term *America*. First, I understand the term to denote North, Central, and South Americas though I use it specifically here with the understanding of the United States. I am aware of the political and national issues surrounding this term, but I do this to keep consistent with the terminology of the resources I use. Second, I include Hawaii in this survey although the islands were not technically a part of the United States during the early period of which I write. I do so because of the vested business interests of Americans at the time and the ramifications these interests had on the eventual make-up of Asian America.

<sup>8</sup> Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991); Barbara Mercedes Posadas, *The Filipino Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans*, 26.

to American and European diseases. Furthermore, the businessmen noticed that the few Chinese, who were already present on the islands, were more efficient in their labor than were the native islanders.<sup>10</sup> The decline of the native population coupled with the impressions of Chinese laborers, left American businessmen to search for overseas alternatives. Chinese contract laborers, who were almost all men, were therefore brought over the next three decades to work on the plantations.

Plantation owners realized their dependency upon the Chinese labor force and were concerned about their growing number. They began to implement a divide-and-control strategy to offset this concern, recruiting laborers from other regions of the world in order to minimize rising demands for higher wages and any potential shortage or strike by the Chinese.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, businessmen turned to the Portuguese and the Japanese as a way to “mix the labor races” and drive a wedge among them.<sup>12</sup> While there were Japanese laborers prior to the 1880s, it wasn’t until 1885 that an official agreement was struck between Japan and the American, Robert Walker Irwin, to send the first group of Japanese contract laborers to Hawaii.<sup>13</sup> But within a few years, plantation owners became concerned with the increasing numbers

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<sup>10</sup> Ronald T. Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 22-23.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, updated and rev. ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 25-30.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans*, 11.

of Japanese laborers, who had quickly surpassed the number of Chinese, since their arrival.

Owners eventually turned their efforts to Korea to maintain a divide-and-control strategy among the various ethnicities, bringing the first group to Hawaii in 1903. The annexation of Hawaii to the United States in 1898 prevented owners from countering increasing numbers of Japanese laborers with a renewed recruitment of Chinese laborers. Now under the jurisdiction of the United States, Hawaii was not allowed to bring in Chinese laborers under the 1882 Exclusion Act which legally prohibited any Chinese laborer from entering the United States or its territory of Hawaii, a first of its kind for the United States. The recruitment of Koreans therefore, was a calculated response to the growing numbers of Japanese as American owners understood the tense, political climate between the two countries. They reasoned the Koreans would work against rather than combine efforts with the Japanese, which would ultimately benefit the owners' ability to keep labor cost low and prevent any solidarity from occurring among the laborers.

The immigration of Koreans to Hawaii differed from the Chinese or Japanese in several ways. First, whereas the Chinese and Japanese established relatively large numbers (50,000 and 180,000 respectively), the

Koreans numbered far less (under 8,000).<sup>14</sup> This was mostly due to the quick halt the Japanese government put to Korean immigration in 1905 after it established a protectorate over Korea in the same year.<sup>15</sup> Japanese officials reasoned that if they could halt Korean movement to Hawaii, plantation owners would not be able to counter Japanese demands for higher wages with a different labor group. This was significant because Japanese laborers, looking for higher wages, were leaving Hawaii for California in significant droves. Japanese remigration to the mainland heightened the possibility of Japanese exclusion from it as white Californians became increasingly concerned about an influx of Japanese laborers.<sup>16</sup> Second, unlike the Chinese or Japanese who came from rural, agricultural areas, the majority of Koreans had lived in urban dwellings. Resultantly, many immigrants did not work in agriculture and therefore did not have the skills to succeed in plantation life. This expedited their movement off the plantations and back into the cities. Third, the immigrants came from geographically diverse regions of Korea. By contrast, the Chinese and Japanese came largely from the Guangdong region of China and from a couple of prefectures of southwestern Japan. Fourth,

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<sup>14</sup> Wayne Patterson, *The Ilse: First-Generation Korean Immigrants in Hawaii, 1903-1973* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii, 2000), 5.

<sup>15</sup> While Japan severely lessened Korean migration, there remained a small trickle until 1915. See David K. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 36.

<sup>16</sup> Patterson, *Ilse*, 5-9.



Koreans were a diverse group relative to the other two. The diversity included a mixture of class, region, and employment. On the contrary, because Chinese and Japanese laborers came largely from two regions and from the farming population, they were more akin to one another. Fifth, Chinese and Japanese laborers came under the contract-labor system prior to Hawaii's annexation. Koreans, on the other hand, could freely work for the highest bidder of their services since they arrived after 1898 and were now under U.S. law which prohibited contract labor. This allowed Koreans more mobility than what the Chinese and Japanese initially faced.

A last major difference between the Koreans and their immigrant predecessors is significant. While Chinese and Japanese laborers came typically as single men, husbands, and fathers looking to return to their homeland after gathering enough resources to pay off land debts and taxes, it was not uncommon to see Korean families make the trek together across the Pacific. A reason for this phenomenon can be accounted for by the role religion played. American Christian businessmen and Christian missionaries assisted plantation owners' recruitment of Koreans. Having more influence in Korea than the other two countries, Christianity was vital in presenting Hawaii as an enticing and viable alternative to the economic, political, and religious difficulties in Korea. Advertisement continued to portray plantation life in a favorable manner and the solicitation of American businessmen was affirmed

by Christian missionaries who had gained the trust of Koreans.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, owners helped to establish Christianity on the plantations as a way to keep Koreans happy and productive while also lessening the incentive to leave the grounds for urban areas. Combining religion and business served to market Hawaii as an idyllic destination for families, and persons of religious persecution. Christianity had not yet made an influence in China or Japan to the extent that it had in Korea.

#### *To the Mainland*

Rumors of “Gold Mountain” drew far more Chinese to the northern coast of California than to Hawaii. As did their counterparts in Hawaii, they came as sojourners, looking to strike it rich, and then return to their homeland with cash in hand.<sup>18</sup> There were over 20,000 Chinese who entered San Francisco in 1852.<sup>19</sup> However, as would become the pattern to systemically discriminate against foreigners, a tax was imposed to discourage international immigration to California and to lessen any economic competition for Whites. The flow of Chinese migration dwindled in 1853 to less than a mere 5,000 due to the Foreign Miners’ Tax.<sup>20</sup> However as the Central Pacific Railroad Company initiated their project to build the western section of the

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<sup>17</sup> Patterson, *Ilse*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Harry H. L. Kitano and Roger Daniels, *Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), 21.

<sup>19</sup> Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

transcontinental railroad, they targeted their early efforts to the Chinese thus bolstering once again, the number of Chinese migrants.

The Chinese faced considerable discrimination as they were all too often the target of prejudice initially aimed at Hispanics.<sup>21</sup> Though the Chinese in Hawaii were mistreated on the plantation, the owners continued to welcome them. No white working class existed on the islands, thereby making Chinese labor a greater necessity.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the rallying cry of Californians was "The Chinese must go!" largely on account of two reasons, economic competition and racial prejudice.<sup>23</sup> Taxes on overcrowded living conditions and the requirement of the Chinese to shave their heads in order to demarcate them reflect the anti-Chinese sentiment they endured. Furthermore, the legal system prevented Blacks, American Indians, and the Chinese from testifying in California courts.<sup>24</sup> These measures would only be the precursor of what was to follow. In 1882, the U.S. government passed its first act to ever deny a group entry into the country based upon its race. The Chinese Exclusion Act would make its mark not so much in halting Chinese immigration, as much as in establishing a questionable precedence given its assertion as a country

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<sup>21</sup> Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 179.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 24.

based upon freedom.<sup>25</sup> The United States was now a gatekeeping nation on the basis of race and economics.

As expected, Japanese immigration to the mainland increased following Chinese exclusion. From 1885-1924, there were 180,000 Japanese that migrated to the mainland.<sup>26</sup> Most of these initially tried their hand in railroad building but eventually made a mark in agriculture. One theory attributes this success to the timely entry of the Japanese into agriculture.<sup>27</sup> Nineteenth-century urbanization and industrialization increased the demand for fresh produce in the city. Coupled with the advancement of the irrigation system, this increase helped spur the Japanese to farming success.

Though the Japanese were thriving farmers, they too received their share of ethnic discrimination and racism.<sup>28</sup> Their discrimination, on the whole however, differed from the Chinese largely on account of the way the United States viewed their respective nations. In the eyes of the United States, China, on the one hand, was a weakening power. Japan, on the other, continued to

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<sup>25</sup> Significant numbers of Chinese laborers still entered the United States following the Exclusion Act for several reasons including the inability to practically implement a written rule, alternate entry through Canada and Mexico, the lucrative business of smuggling it afforded U.S. officials, and the Paper Sons phenomenon. See Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>28</sup> Remarks directed at the Japanese demonstrated the sentiment towards them. Some examples were "Jap Go Home," "Goddamn Jap!" "Yellow Jap!" "Dirty Jap!" and "Japs, we do not want you." See Takaki, *Strangers*, 181.

draw the attention of U.S. officials for they had demonstrated their military prowess in two wars, the Sino-Japanese (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese (1904-1905). Defeating the Chinese might have been expected as China previously showed signs of decline. It was the defeat of Russia however, that made the United States vigilant of this rising power.

Because the United States' stance towards Japan was now guarded, they strategically assuaged the desires of the Japanese government. Two incidents illustrate the posture the United States took towards Japan. In 1906, the San Francisco school board adopted measures to put all Asian children into one school.<sup>29</sup> This incensed Japan's government and raised controversy between the two nations. Japan claimed this act violated a previous treaty guaranteeing educational equality to that of other Americans. Furthermore, a move to integrate Japanese children with Chinese and Koreans was viewed disrespectfully by the Japanese government as they saw these two countries as lesser than their own for they had recently defeated one in battle and was now attempting to take over the other. The eventual decision by President Theodore Roosevelt to overturn the school board's pronouncement rescinded segregation for Japanese children but still remained for Chinese and Koreans. According to one scholar, the purpose of the school board's act for segregation was to push the federal government towards Japanese

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<sup>29</sup> Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 60; Takaki, *Strangers*, 201-03.

exclusion.<sup>30</sup> They reasoned that if they could create controversy over something relatively innocuous—there were only ninety-three Japanese students total—they would cause such a stir as to have the ear of Washington concerning developing racial, economic, and political matters throughout California.

The 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement was designed to appease this growing anti-Japanese animosity. Crafted between the two nations, Japan agreed to halt its issuance of passports to migrant laborers to the United States while saving face from any potential exclusionary measures by the latter; they were aware of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The agreement was made to give the impression to the Japanese that the control of the flow of migration was in the hands of Japan's government and not in the United States'. However, the curbing also allowed the United States to pacify to a degree, the animosity Americans had with the Japanese and rising numbers of Asian laborers. The agreement was framed in the United States as essentially an exclusionary measure designed to keep out the Japanese.

Growing enmity towards the Japanese and other Asians would continue to be addressed through government legislation but also included the court system. Two landmark cases shaped the legal system and public discourse on the stance towards Asians in America. The outcomes of the 1922 *Takao Ozawa vs. United States* case and the 1923 *United States vs. Bhagat Singh*

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<sup>30</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 202-03.

*Thind* case defined who was eligible for citizenship and on what basis. Takao Ozawa, who immigrated to the United States in 1894 as a student, filed for naturalization in 1914 on the basis that he had received an American education, worked for an American company in Hawaii, had married a Japanese woman who also was educated in America, and was a person of good, moral character, a prerequisite to citizenship.<sup>31</sup> While the court affirmed his standing of good, moral character, he was denied naturalization in the U.S. District Court of Hawaii because he was not white. Ozawa appealed the case on the basis that his skin color was lighter than other Italians, Portuguese, and Spanish, who were granted citizenship. He was eventually denied citizenship by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1922 on the clarification that a “white person” was synonymous with “a person of the Caucasian race.”<sup>32</sup> Sucheng Chan points out the inconsistency of the U.S. Supreme Court’s reasoning as just a year later, Bhagat Singh Thind, an Asian Indian who had served in the U.S. military during World War I, had his citizenship rescinded by the Court on the basis that though Asian Indians were technically considered Caucasian, he was not white.<sup>33</sup> While the Ozawa case used race and not skin color as the

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<sup>31</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 208.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy P. Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008), 22-23.

<sup>33</sup> Prior to the Thind case, there had been previous instances of approved naturalization to Asian Indians based upon the technicality of race. These, including Thind’s, were revoked based upon the 1923 verdict. See Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans*, 93-94.

determining factor for citizenship, the Thind case reversed this and used skin color to highlight what is known to the “common man” concerning the understanding of “white.”<sup>34</sup>

Koreans were no less recipients of the ethnic antagonism directed towards the Chinese and Japanese. They endured accusations by white Americans who were unable or unwilling to differentiate between Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. In some ways their experience as early immigrants patterned the Japanese, such as their success in agriculture. However, there were some marked differences. The Koreans did not establish their ethnic enclaves as did the Chinese and Japanese; there were too few of them. This raised concern when Koreans faced labor issues and ethnic animosity. They were unable to work within the confines of an ethnic community and therefore traveled to regions such as Utah and Wyoming to overcome legislative acts aimed at deterring their and other Asians' economic success.<sup>35</sup>

A second difference was the perceptions Koreans had of their own immigrant status. While they did not see themselves necessarily as settlers in this new country, they also did not perceive themselves as sojourners. Rather they saw themselves as exiles, having no home to which to return on account of Japanese governance that had been negotiated between the United States

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<sup>34</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 299.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.



and Japan in 1905.<sup>36</sup> This exile status would prove to be a rallying point among Korean immigrants as they politically organized and raised funds towards various independence movements designed to free their homeland.

A third difference was the development of institutional religion in the form of Christianity and the Church. The Church offered Koreans not only spiritual enrichment through religious gatherings, but it also provided them with an ethnic organization that served to help their social and emotional needs.<sup>37</sup> The Church offered opportunity for community building and became the institution that housed various independence movements. It propagated Korean culture through the sharing of food, traditions, and language.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, it served as a social agency helping laborers socially network about employment and legal matters.

In sum, the immigration of early Asians to America was marked by trial and hardship. While circumstances in Hawaii were different than the mainland west coast, ethnic Asians in both settings navigated their lives within a context of ethnic antagonism. Asians maneuvered through the racial animosity thrust upon them by individual whites. They however had great difficulty overcoming legal court decisions and legislative acts that eventually barred all Asians in 1924 from legal entry into the country.

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<sup>36</sup> Woo-Keun Han, *The History of Korea*, trans. Lee Kyung-Shik, ed. Grafton K. Mintz (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1971), 447.

<sup>37</sup> Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*.

<sup>38</sup> Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 130.

## The Significance of Race for Contemporary Asian Americans

### *Race and Racial Formation*

Race remains a significant factor in society. The reframing of race and racism through Michael Omi and Howard Winant's groundbreaking theory on racial formation shifted the notion of race from biological and cultural essentialism to a historically-situated construction that produces meaning through social relations.<sup>39</sup> That is, while people notice phenotypical differences, these differences are used arbitrarily to categorize people into racial hierarchies. In the previous theory on race, advocates reasoned certain traits as essential to specific races. All Asians, for example, are good at math on account of their cultural expectations and biological DNA. In the new concept, race is socially and historically situated and thus, is constantly in flux. The earlier example of the racial "movement" of the Mississippi Chinese is a fitting illustration of this latter concept as they were seen at the outset as near Black and later, as near White.

It is notable that Omi and Winant do not advocate seeing race as mere illusion, as critics of social construction theory raise. Rather, they see bodily differences and the social conception of race as participating in a larger project they term, "racial formation theory."<sup>40</sup> Racial formation theory is the

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<sup>39</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 55-61.

“sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, transformed, and destroyed.”<sup>41</sup> The theory underscores how the process of arbitrarily categorizing persons on the basis of a shifting concept such as race, is a highly political act and one that is linked to social hegemony with practical ramifications. The Ozawa and Thind cases undeniably demonstrate this. Though categorizing people on the basis of race is not a problem in and of itself, it is what persons do with this categorizing that is often the problem; it can quickly turn into stereotyping and racism.

### *Racism*

Racism is another term with several understandings. One way to understand the term is in person-to-person relations, that is, individual racism. An act of racism occurs when a person spouts racially derisive comments towards another individual. Racism of this kind is often depicted in the racially offensive joke or comment concerning a person or a group by an individual. The focus is upon the individual committing the act. Advocates of this sort view racism as existing only in individual, isolated occurrences and not at systemic levels.

A second way to comprehend racism is at the institutional level. This type of racism is built upon the idea that societal structures are constructed in such a way as to advantage some at the expense of others on the basis of

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<sup>41</sup> Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 55.

race. Slavery and Jim Crow laws in the United States are two examples of this kind.<sup>42</sup> While these were blatant forms of institutional racism that most today would contend is racism, some critical theorists of the post-Civil Rights era argue that institutional racism also comes in less demonstrative forms including the rhetoric of a post-racial and colorblind society.<sup>43</sup> Colorblind racism is built upon the notion that since society has moved past the color line following the Civil Rights movement and particularly in its quest for unity, there are no unequal structures, only individuals who occasionally act upon their racially-discriminating beliefs.

The genius of institutional racism within the United States is to build a logic based upon the discourse of meritocracy. The unofficial motto of the United States is that hard work wins out. This philosophical foundation is even more deleterious when combined with two other aspects: (1) the belief that all start from the same starting point, and (2) that all have the same access to resources. The difficulty of these points lies in the absence of examining processes throughout the history of the United States that have constructed

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<sup>42</sup> Angelo N. Ancheta, *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006). Ancheta provides a theoretical framework of the legal system in the United States as it pertains specifically to the legal history of Asian Americans.

<sup>43</sup> Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

systems that set some ahead of others based upon race.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, these processes concretize in ways that limits the access of resources to some while also creating a rhetoric that disadvantages these very persons. The language of neutrality is a good example. One scholar of color wonders why her darker skin color does not match the “nude” pair of hose or the “neutral” colored Band-Aid when she walks into a store to purchase these products.<sup>45</sup> The inability to view race as an important factor in the way society constructs meaning leads to institutional racism. For when one combines race with the argument of meritocracy, one can deduce that certain races stand where they are in class because of their lack of will power and/or execution. This reasoning has very little, if at all, to do with unfavorable and unjust social structures.

A third type of racism is the ideological. This is akin to what one scholar calls “ethnocentric monoculturalism.”<sup>46</sup> This type of racism is built upon the attitudes and beliefs that one’s nation, ethnic or racial group is inherently

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<sup>44</sup> Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Feagin, a white male, systematically analyzes the founding history of the United States. He argues that throughout U.S. history, a system has been created that has privileged whites over non-whites. On account of this historical process, whites continue to enjoy these privileges.

<sup>45</sup> Jacqueline Battalora, “Whiteness: The Workings of an Ideology in American Society and Culture,” in *Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion: Views from the Other Side*, ed., Rosemary Radford Ruether (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 3-23.

<sup>46</sup> Derald Wing Sue, *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 101.

superior to others. It is the undergirding assumptions that drive nations and groups to commit acts of violence toward others such as the Germans, the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nation but also with non-whites who hold ideological attitudes towards other groups, such as some Far East Asians with Southeast Asians.<sup>47</sup>

A fourth type is internalized racism. This form occurs when persons of the racially discriminated group begin to believe the very narratives that keep them oppressed. Furthermore, the individual who internalizes this racism may actualize one's beliefs, distancing and distinguishing oneself from people of his or her own race.<sup>48</sup> This is witnessed in the Asian who makes the loudest Asian jokes or the Hispanic who says edgy remarks about other Hispanics.

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<sup>47</sup> There is an interesting discussion concerning who can be racist. Derald Wing Sue is representative of the theory that suggests that only Whites can be racist on account of the systemic and structural power they hold which allows them to act on any prejudice and discrimination. Sue argues that while minorities can be ethnically discriminating, they cannot be racist for lack of institutional power. Michael Omi and Howard Winant represent the opposing view which argues that all races can be racist for they all hold power to some extent in various contexts. See Sue, *Overcoming*, 30-31; Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 73.

<sup>48</sup> Karen Pyke and Tran Dang, "'FOB' and 'Whitewashed': Identity and Internalized Racism among Second Generation Asian Americans," *Qualitative Sociology* 26, no. 2 (2003): 150-51.

### *Asian American Stereotypes*

A stereotype is a “belief about a group of individuals” and is used in positive, neutral, and negative fashion.<sup>49</sup> I will focus on the negative use of the term to elucidate several contemporary stereotypes that are detrimental to Asian Americans. I take this approach because while a stereotype such as the *Model Minority* might be construed as a positive, it is in effect, a latently dangerous one with damaging effects on Asian Americans.

As early as the mid- to late 1800s, Hollywood began to depict Asian Americans on film as the “Yellow Peril,” a common stereotype placed first upon the Chinese and then to ensuing Asian groups.<sup>50</sup> The stereotype was based upon the fear that the incoming horde of the Yellow race would eventually overtake the social and economic arenas controlled by whites. In addition to this takeover, they would add to its decline as their immorality was thought to infiltrate the very fibers of Western society. The Chinese were viewed as unclean, cheaters of ill-repute and persons who would advance the moral decay of America.<sup>51</sup>

One reason that contributed to this belief was the issue of Asian American sexuality. Historically within the United States, Asian men have carried two extreme stereotypes regarding their sexuality. On the one hand,

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<sup>49</sup> Shunsuke Kanahara, “A Review of the Definitions of Stereotype and a Proposal for a Progressional Model,” *Individual Differences Research* 4, no. 5 (2006): 311.

<sup>50</sup> Timothy Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 195.

<sup>51</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 104-08.

they are seen as hypersexualized men who not only crave sex, but sex with white women. Filipino men, for instance, were viewed as the “little brown brothers” who would steal away white women from under one’s nose if white men were not vigilant.<sup>52</sup> The discomfort of existing relations between Filipinos and white women was one of the last straws that ignited various riots including the Watsonville Riot of 1930. Incensed with the belief that the Filipinos were undercutting wages and becoming a threat to various labor unions, the height of this frustration culminated in a manhunt for Filipino men who danced with white women at a local hall.<sup>53</sup> This animosity towards Asian men was not unprecedented. The *Grizzly Bear*, the publication of the Native Sons of the Golden West, ran the question, “Would you like your daughter to marry a Japanese?” They would continue, “If not, demand that your representative in the Legislature vote for segregation of whites and Asiatics in the public schools.”<sup>54</sup> This narrative has continued to shape the sex-craved stereotype for contemporary Asian American men as witnessed by the character of Long Duk Dong, an international student in the 1984 Brat Pack movie, *Sixteen*

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<sup>52</sup> The term “little brown brothers” was first used by William Howard Taft who, at the time, was the first American civilian governor of the Philippines. While the term was initially not intended as a derogatory remark, it does reveal the paternalistic attitude that was prevalent during that era towards Asians and non-whites. See Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 89; Takaki, *Strangers*, 329-30.

<sup>53</sup> Howard A. DeWitt, “The Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930: A Case Study of the Great Depression and Ethnic Conflict in California,” *Southern California Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (1979): 291-302.

<sup>54</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 201.



*Candles*. Dong, whose character name plays on a sexual innuendo for the male organ, became a pop-culture icon as viewers followed his first sexual encounter with a white American woman. While Dong's memorable line, "No more yanky my wanky!" thrust him into movie lore, it only reinforced the hypersexualized stereotype of Asian American men.

Ironically on the other hand, the stereotype of the asexual Asian man has equally plagued Asian American men.<sup>55</sup> This stereotype counters the hypersexual narrative by depicting Asian men as disinterested in their sexuality. It builds on the idea that Asian men neither have any interest in sex nor are the targets of any sexual desires and fantasies. Though the movie, *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004), is meant to be a parody of racial stereotypes in the United States, the script does not end in common Hollywood fashion. While Harold, the Asian American of Far East descent, finally "gets the girl" at the end of the movie with a prolonged kiss, the scene does not conclude with any further explicit sexual encounter as would be expected in a film with a white, male lead such as the *James Bond* series. While the life of James Bond is a stretch for the average male of any race, the point is that this has yet to occur over mainstream media with an Asian male as it has with white, black, and Hispanic males.

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<sup>55</sup> Jachinson Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Chan gives a good overview of the various sexual stereotypes of Asian American men.

Asian American women have also had sexual stereotypes placed on them that parallel Asian American men but with a slightly different nuance. While Asian American men have been cast as either hypersexual or asexual, Asian American women have been stereotyped as fully sexual, whether in mystery or in docile obedience.<sup>56</sup> On the one hand, the Dragon Lady is akin to the sinister Fu Manchu, exotic and shadowy, yet dangerously intriguing. This stereotype was drawn largely from the character played by Ann May Wong in the film, *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), and *Shanghai Express* (1932).<sup>57</sup> The stereotype is based upon the idea that while the Dragon Lady is to be feared because of the strangeness that enshrouds her, her deviance and mystery lures into her captivity those who are curious. There is an undertone of deep sexuality to the character though not blatantly so. On the other hand, the stereotype of the Lotus Blossom portrays on the surface, a much different appearance. Fragile, dainty, naïve and perfectly obedient, this image initially captured the fantasies of white American men through Miyoshi Umeki's role of a back-scrubbing lover of a white, American serviceman stationed overseas in the film, *Sayonara* (1957).

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<sup>56</sup> Deborah Gee, "Slaying the Dragon," VHS, directed by Deborah Gee, eds. Herb Wong, Deborah Gee, and Pamela Porter (San Francisco: CrossCurrent Media, National Asian American Transcommunication Association, 1987); Laura Hyun-Yi Kang, "The Desiring of Asian Female Bodies: Interracial Romance and Cinematic Subjection," *Visual Anthropology Review* 9, no. 1 (1993): 5-21.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 198.

While Umeki helped to introduce the Lotus Blossom stereotype, it would evolve through Nancy Kwan's portrayal of the character, Suzie Wong, in the 1960 film, *The World of Suzie Wong*. Kwan's character would add an explicitly sexual and aggressive overtone to the stereotype, one that would further a growing enchantment with Asian American women. The combination of docility and obedience with an aggressive flare both on the dance floor and in the bedroom would make the Lotus Blossom an enduring stereotype for Asian American women.

The interesting point however between Asian American men and women concerning these stereotypes is how race and gender interlock in such fashion that differences are constructed between them. Though there is still the element of mystery among all of the Asian American stereotypes, the sexual stereotypes for women are viewed in a positive manner by those that produce and perpetuate the stereotype.<sup>58</sup> The same cannot be said however of the stereotypes for Asian American men and their sexuality. As noted above, they are seen as sexually deviant, either sex-starved or not sexual at all.

Two other stereotypes, the Forever Foreigner and the Model Minority, have also been destructive for contemporary Asian Americans. The Forever

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<sup>58</sup> By making this point, I am not advocating in any way the production or the perpetuation of these stereotypes. The subjectivity of Asian American women is altered through their objectification on screen and in society. Rather, I am highlighting the difference of social meaning on account of gender and race.

Foreigner stereotype (also called the “Perpetual Foreigner”) occurs when Asian Americans, on account of their race, are not seen as fully American. Beginning with the Chinese, Asian Americans have historically faced accusations of unassimilability.<sup>59</sup> The early belief argued that Asians would never adjust to the demands of Western society and therefore would not warrant full “American” status. This was largely based upon white Americans’ views of the heathen Chinese’s moral character. While this belief regarding the moral character of Asians continues to remain in similar form (e.g., Western culture as the standard of “normal” measure), Asian Americans who grow up in the United States, know only this country as their home, and are fully acculturated to Western ideals and practices, are still not accepted by others as having full American heritage on account of their “racial uniforms.”<sup>60</sup> Asian Americans of fourth and fifth generations continue to get asked the question, “Where are you from? No, where are you really from?” When Michelle Kwan, the heavily-favored American-born skater lost the 1998 Olympic gold to fellow American, Tara Lipinski, MSNBC ran the Internet headline: “American Beats Kwan,” reinforcing the notion that regardless the generation removed from immigration, Asians in America will not be regarded as fully American.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Takaki, *Strangers*, 246.

<sup>60</sup> Robert E. Park, “Human Migration and the Marginal Man,” *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (1928): 890.

<sup>61</sup> Timothy Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 231.

Ironically, the Model Minority stereotype has often served as the yin to the yang of the Forever Foreigner stereotype; both are equally injurious. This stereotype bases its logic upon the belief that Asian Americans have achieved the success of middle- and upper-class, white America. Stats such as average household income and average level of education achieved are used to prove that Asians in America have fully attained structural assimilation. They, as immigrants, have used their strong work ethic to overcome any barriers to achieve the American Dream and in doing so, have become “Honorary Whites” in the process.<sup>62</sup> While this stereotype appears benevolent, a closer analysis reveals that this is perhaps the most devastating stereotype of the ones previously mentioned for it conceals two glaring points.

First, though it is true that some Asians in America have achieved a higher class level than other ethnic minorities including white ethnics, this is not true of all Asians. The stereotype casts *all* Asians into the same essence when viewed as a social construction; the term *Asian American* is a highly political word that does not capture the full diversity of Asians in America. Stacey J. Lee’s study on Asian American youth in a Pennsylvania high school illustrates the internal diversity of Asian Americans.<sup>63</sup> While there are Asian American students that come from wealthy families, there simultaneously

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<sup>62</sup> Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 30-31.

<sup>63</sup> Stacey J. Lee, *Unraveling the “Model Minority” Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996).

exists a group of Southeast Asians that struggle with their basic necessities. The danger of the Model Minority is that it compiles all Asian Americans into one category when in reality, it is a heterogeneous group with varying histories, cultures, and classes; not all Asians have achieved class success.

Second, the notion of the model minority as exemplified in the moniker, "Honorary White," is often used to pit Asian Americans with other ethnic minority groups.<sup>64</sup> We remember that this was nothing new as plantation owners in Hawaii used a divide-and-control strategy to pit Asian ethnic minorities against one another. As honorary white, a narrative is created around the relative success of Asian Americans in education and class. They are seen as exemplars of meritocracy and the American Dream, that if you put your mind and will to it, anyone can be successful. Furthermore, Asian Americans are seen to have achieved success relatively quietly, refusing to organize in protest to the extent that other minorities have. The difficulty with this label of honorary white and model minority is that it does not take into account the structural obstacles that make it difficult, if not prevent altogether, some minority groups from achieving success. Yet the use of Asian Americans as an example increases the animosity minority groups may have for Asian

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<sup>64</sup> Nazli Kibria, *Becoming Asian American: Second-Generation Chinese and Korean American Identities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 132-34.

Americans which some have argued, is the buffer role Asian Americans play between Whites and non-whites.<sup>65</sup>

### Conclusion

I have argued throughout this chapter that among other aspects, people are sociohistorical beings. While they may carry a measure of subjectivity, they also are individuals within a social matrix of constructed meaning. They are actors in the unfolding of their own lives. But they too are parts of a complex dynamic that imposes meaning upon them regardless their agency. People will read meaning into others and in so doing, will uphold or deny privileges and opportunities based upon these interpretations.

Situating Asian Americans and specifically, Asian American men, within their sociohistorical context reveals a diverse experience that has been historically marred by racial and ethnic animosity and discrimination. We witness from the early immigrants to Hawaii and later to the mainland, common hardships endured on account of the immigration experience. However, we also discover from their stories the adversity they faced due to inequitable structures and beliefs aimed at them for the purpose of exclusion.

Though U.S. policies have changed regarding Asians in America, studying contemporary theory on race poses a new problem, tacit racial

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<sup>65</sup> Elaine H. Kim, "Korean Americans in U.S. Race Relations: Some Considerations," *Amerasia Journal* 23, no. 2 (1997): 69-78; Claire Jean Kim and Taeku Lee, "Interracial Politics: Asian Americans and Other Communities of Color," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34, no. 3 (2001): 631-37.

discrimination, notably through stereotyping. On account of stereotypes, a narrative is created regarding Asian Americans which become difficult to elude. They are the discourses that provide the hermeneutical lens through which Asian Americans are read.



## CHAPTER 2

### MEN'S STUDIES, GENDER, RACE, AND VIOLENCE

#### The Lineage to Men's Studies

The notion that gender is something you do and enact rather than something you have is a relatively young idea with its roots in feminist critical theory and social construction theory. Beginning with the Women's Suffrage movement of the mid-nineteenth century at Seneca Falls (1848), women began to critique and change the discourse and ideologies of sex-role expectations. Practically, it resulted in a woman's ability to cast a political vote. Ideologically, it would ignite a wave of thinking that transformed not only the way women are viewed, but also men. The second wave of the feminist movement began in the 1960s as it addressed concrete issues such as the number of women in the professional workplace, but again raised ideological issues that affected institutional thought and practice. The movement heightened persons' awareness to the idea that much of society favors, and is constructed, by men on the behalf of men without society being aware of this bias (*androcentrism*). Consequently, one of the intentions of this second wave was to create a critical consciousness to this underlying predisposition.<sup>1</sup>

The field of Women's Studies emerged out of this critique as a call was issued for women to write about lived experiences as women. Adherents

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra Lipsitz Bem, *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1-2.

made explicit the need to locate oneself within society for they argued that all human experiences were not the same due to various factors such as gender. As society expected certain roles and behaviors from the different sexes, these expectations created frames which validated gender behavior as appropriate or inappropriate. Women's Studies in turn, questioned these long-held beliefs and necessitated critical analysis pertaining to issues of power, authority, decision-making, and the like. Two significant works in the 1980s brought to light two important gender differences.<sup>2</sup> First, women exhibit moral reasoning and construct knowledge in ways different than men. Second, the assumption that written and researched literature up to that point was representative and thus standard for all persons came into question since most of the literature had been written by men. It critiqued the assumption that: (1) men could make claims on the full human experience without considering hermeneutical biases, and (2) society constructs meaning the same regardless the gender.

As Women's Studies introduced gender as a lens for critical social analysis, men followed their lead and began to discuss issues pertinent to men's lives.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, men began to realize that they too performed

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<sup>2</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Mary Field Belenky, et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> Michael S Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996), introduction.

gender and therefore, needed to write from this particular viewpoint. Men could no longer author works without making explicit their social location. This move by the newer men's studies did not intend to further androcentrism and patriarchy. Locating oneself socially was rather aimed at addressing them.

This approach by men and the development of Men's Studies was not always so. According to Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, early efforts to study men emanated from three approaches, biological, anthropological, and sociological.<sup>4</sup> The biological approach (*biological essentialism*) argued that men behave and act differently from women on account of innate, and natural differences. Men are aggressive, competitive, and violent for instance, because of the higher testosterone levels in men than women. Critics of this approach however point to the lack of evidence of causation, that biology and gender differences are causally linked or that the relationship between the biological and social is in only one direction, the biological influencing the sociological, and not the other way around.

The anthropological approach appears similar to the biological in that it stresses a similar "essence" argument of manhood. The difference between the biological and the anthropological approaches however is in the origination of gender variances. While the biological approach affirms that nature takes over, the anthropological approach maintains that adaptations to the

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<sup>4</sup> Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, eds., *Men's Lives*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), xv-xvii.

environment are the cause of gender difference. Mothers are intended to be with the children to provide emotional support and other basic needs such as food and security. Men, on the other hand, are predisposed to bonding through competition as seen in hunting and gathering tribes. Thus they are inclined towards work organizations. Scholars of culture argue however that culture shapes gender roles more than inclinations that arise out of adaptations to the environment. It is within particular culture and not because of a universal norm that ideas of manhood originate. For instance, cultural norms of the Semai of Central Malaysia teach the men to avoid violence and conflict. They noticeably run away when faced with conflict and danger rather than match aggression with aggression.<sup>5</sup>

Early studies to the sociological approach maintained that certain behaviors and attitudes concerning males and females were a combination of the two previous approaches. On account of the environment and biological differences, gender scripts ensued. Sex roles theory resulted in prescriptive standards attributing “technical mastery, aggression, competitiveness, and cognitive abstractions” to masculinity and “emotional nurturance, connectedness, and passivity” to femininity.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, many parenting guides, for instance, followed on how to rear a child to be a healthy and

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Smith, "Fear and Power in the Lives of Men," in *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities*, ed. Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark W. Muesse (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Kimmel and Messner, *Men's Lives*, xvii.

normative boy or girl. Critics of the sex role approach and its gender-norming script came from feminist critics and the Women's Studies movement, who argued against gender scripts because of the differences exhibited by men and women from these scripts and thus the political nature of such an approach.

Male scholars followed the lead of feminists and began to question the restriction sex roles placed upon men. Joseph Pleck's "sex role strain," contended that men were confined as persons on account of the ideological assumptions that men needed to exhibit certain behaviors and attributes.<sup>7</sup> Pleck's work opened the door for Men's Studies to develop, particularly as a critical field that looked to address issues of power differential based upon social location.<sup>8</sup>

As Men's Studies developed, it would continue to glean from its feminist predecessors. Womanist, Mujerista, and Asian feminists raised concern over the monolithic voice of white feminists. They challenged the feminist conversation to include the heterogeneous experiences of all women given their differing privilege and social location. Gender was not the only lens in which to critique hegemonic masculinity. Rather, women of color called to include other factors such as race and class as interlocking tools for analysis. Feminists of color argued that white women who critiqued patriarchy and the

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph H. Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Kimmel and Messner, *Men's Lives*, xviii.

work of men through only one lens were not too far off from those very men. Deconstructing patriarchy through one lens would only shift the hegemony from men, to white women. They contended that all women's experiences could not be captured under the single factor of gender for that gendered interpretation would largely be from a middle-class, white woman's perspective without identifying it as such.

Men's Studies once again followed suit and began to discuss masculinities rather than a single masculinity. Literature, predominantly variegated by race, arose within the field with an increase in Black men's studies and Chicano studies. Men's Studies texts of the 1980s and 1990s lacked in large part however, the voices of Asian American men. While there are specific chapters dedicated to the experiences of African American, Latino American, Native American and Gay masculinities, Asian American masculinities are mostly absent.<sup>9</sup> In one noteworthy volume, the two chapters dedicated to Asian Americans include a chapter written by an Asian American woman and the other on gay, Asian pornography.<sup>10</sup> The first chapter written by

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark W. Muesse, eds., *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Stephen B. Boyd, *The Men We Long to Be: Beyond Lonely Warriors and Desperate Lovers* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997); Kimmel and Messner, *Men's Lives*.

<sup>10</sup> Yen Le Espiritu, "All Men are Not Created Equal: Asian Men in U.S. History," in , *Men's Lives*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 35-44; Richard Fung, "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn," in Kimmel and Messner, *Men's Lives*, 495-504.

a woman looks historically at the Asian male in America rather than discuss the actual contemporary experiences of Asian American males, much like the chapters on the other marginal groups do. The latter chapter on gay, Asian pornography, while also a masculinity, has so many nuances to it, that it addresses a narrow portion of Asian American men's experiences.

While Raewyn (Robert) Connell's typology of various masculinities is helpful in that it differentiates hegemonic masculinities from marginal ones (due largely to racial and color differences), it does not progress further in its discussion of various social loci precisely among the marginalized.<sup>11</sup> It clumps marginalized masculinities together without giving nuance to the differences among them. Though Asian American males do engage and glean from the research of Black and Latino studies of masculinities, it would be remiss to assume that they share the same social location. For many Asian American men, they do not possess some of the power that Black and Latino men in society possess. Historically, the political voices to which Asian American men turn when acts such as the Vincent Chin slaying are committed have been far less than Blacks and Latinos. Chin, a twenty-seven year old Chinese American was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat in Detroit in 1982 when two white auto workers blaming *Japan* for the automobile downturn, killed him. Pouring salt on the wound, the two murderers were initially sentenced to three years' probation as the Asian American community was slow to respond

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<sup>11</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 80.

politically. This is a far cry from the African American community having the voices of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Jesse Jackson, and Al Sharpton and the Latino American community with Cesar Chavez, Antonio Villaraigosa, and pop icons such as George Lopez who have and will speak politically. Though it can be argued that the highest profile (even after the marital scandals) Asian American today is Tiger Woods (higher than political figures such as Senators Daniel Inouye and Leland Yee, and Governor Bobby Jindal), his Thai ethnicity and majority Asian race, are often trumped in media by his African American race, thus often rendering the former two invisible.<sup>12</sup> One can argue this is due to the historical patterns of the one drop rule within the legal system of the United States. The rule stated that a person is considered Black if they have just one drop of black blood regardless the majority of their race.<sup>13</sup> While the rule has since been made unlawful, it still culturally remains and may be a reason as to why the media and society view Woods as Black more than any other race or ethnicity. Furthermore, the issue of subjectivity and agency still remain. Tiger Woods, who self identifies as a “Cablinasian” (part Caucasian, Black, Native American, and Asian) and technically “more

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<sup>12</sup> Henry Yu, "How Tiger Woods Lost His Stripes," in *Post-Nationalist American Studies as a History of Race, Migration, and the Commodification of Culture*, ed. John Carlos Rowe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Frank H. Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 295; Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 53-54.



Thai than anything," is not seen as such.<sup>14</sup> His racial script is written for him by others.

### Gender, Race, and Disadvantage

One summation of the contemporary feminist critique is this: one's sex affects one's experience in life not because there is something inherently different between boys and girls, but because society expects and reacts to the sexes differently. Social construction theory argues that a person's gender (i.e., what one does to enact their sex) is in effect, limited to the ideals and expectations society places upon this person. On account of this limitation, a person is narrowed into fulfilling society's expected gender roles. A young male will only be a "boy" if he demonstrates certain traits and behaviors. Social construction theory however argues against the notion that a young boy will wear blue, play with cars, and show aggression because there is something biologically inherent within him as a male. Rather, it contends that a boy will do these because society has created certain expectations of boys demarcated by these examples. Society creates a gender script that projects acceptable behavior. There is too much social pressure to give a boy a pink blanket, Barbie dolls, and exhibit non-aggressive behavior; the gender script does not allow for this. The parents, in this respect, are narrowed in their choices of what is legitimate and valid parenting. Furthermore, persons committed to a

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<sup>14</sup> Wu, *Yellow*, 293-95.

notion of *biological essentialism* (i.e., biological sex determines behavior such as aggression) may not have an understanding of an alternative gender script and when confronted with one, interpret it as deviant.<sup>15</sup>

What is one to do however with boys and men who do not exhibit these gender scripts? Furthermore, social construction theorists maintain that particular context (i.e., geographical, historical, and cultural) shapes the way society understands gender roles. Therefore, while they may do so slowly, gender meanings and expectations inevitably change. What then has the gender script for Asian American men historically been? Moreover, what is the gender script now?

The previous chapter may give some clues as to how to answer these. Asian Americans have historically faced many stereotypes that have produced scripts through which they have been seen in the United States. For Asian American men, as it has been for Asian American women, these scripts have been further confined on account of gender. Stereotypes such as the Perpetual Foreigner and Yellow Peril have cast dark shadows over Asian Americans. The hyper- and asexual stereotypes have further narrowed this script for Asian American men. In addition to these, the Glass Ceiling hypothesis provides another clue. It contends that while Asian Americans have average incomes comparable to those of white Americans and have surpassed Whites on average in professional jobs, they remain

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<sup>15</sup> Kimmel and Messner, *Men's Lives*, xiii-xxii.

underrepresented in managerial and upper echelon positions relative to their educational success, particularly in Corporate America.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, while Asian American men may overall have an average income on par with white men, they have a lower average income to comparable Whites “when occupation and industry are taken into account.”<sup>17</sup>

### *Race in the Workplace*

I asked the men in my interviews if and how they saw race as an issue in their workplace. Since the men were from various life stages and at different points in their professional careers, I was especially interested in those men who have worked in Corporate America and thus understand the dynamics of this culture. The younger men who had not worked in Corporate America tended to answer that race was generally not a factor although they acknowledged that it used to be one. In their view, times have changed and employers and coworkers look at the individual and not the color or race of a person. These men often exemplified the colorblind rhetoric and reasoning discussed earlier in Chapter 2, that if racism is experienced, it is an individual phenomenon and not a systemic one.

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<sup>16</sup> Deborah Woo, "The Glass Ceiling and Asian Americans: A Research Monograph," ed. U.S. Department of Labor and Glass Ceiling Commission (Santa Cruz: University of California, 1994), [http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=key\\_workplace](http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=key_workplace) (accessed March 7, 2011); Fong, *Contemporary Asian*, 116-28.

<sup>17</sup> Harriet Orcutt Duleep and Seth Sanders, "Discrimination at the Top: American-Born Asian and White Men," *Industrial Relations* 31, no. 3 (1992): 429.

One younger male in his twenties who does work in Corporate America was a bit more ambiguous when discussing race and society. On the one hand, he felt that race is a factor “in the overall broad spectrum of society,” but on the other, continued to give an example of this type of racism as the telling of “jokes or you know, just subtle phrases or the way people phrase things.”<sup>18</sup> When I asked him about race and work, he shared that Asian Americans do have an advantage in gaining employment because the stereotype is that they “work hard [and are] very smart people” therefore the belief that employers are willing to hire them more readily than other races. I pressed him further to reflect on Asian Americans at the top levels.

Mark: Umm, you’re working Corporate America?

Chris: Yes.

Mark: Do you see that Asian males are being hired at the top levels?

Chris: Some, definitely some.

Mark: Men or women or both?

Chris: Mostly men. But yeah, you do not see as many Asian American men even still in the higher tiers of the corporate ladder. I don’t know if that’s necessarily because of our racial discrimination. A lot of what I found out working in Corporate America is, a lot of people in the higher-ups, they do have some kind of time, whether it be through friendships or families, and it has nothing to do against not liking this or that worker. It’s just [that] they’re family or they’re friends. They are going to have favoritism because of that factor. Asian American men who made it to the top on their own, I believe they are highly respected. They just have this demeanor about themselves saying you know, to show through their actions that they can get the job done and yet

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<sup>18</sup> Interview #11

they don't demand respect. It's just something that you can see. It emanates from them. You know I'll work hard and I'll get the job done.<sup>19</sup>

Chris observes that Asian American men, though not substantially, have succeeded at the top levels. His reasoning is significant however as he believes that those persons in the top levels have come into these positions by way of social networking, whether through friendships or family relationships. Contrastingly, the Asian American men who have broken into the upper administrative tier have done so because of their "demeanor" and the "respect" they command. Alejandro Portes argues that persons who possess social capital are those related to others who become the source of a person's gain.<sup>20</sup> Though one's financial and cultural capital might be somewhat lacking, if a person has the right contacts with influence and resources, then through these robust social networks, one's potential advancement are expanded and realized. For Chris, Asian American men who possess lesser social capital than Whites, rise up into upper administration because of hard work or something within one's character, not on account of their relational resources.

Several of the men pointed to the fact that they felt like they had to work harder in their jobs because of their race. When I asked Michael, who worked in a Fortune 500 company, to comment about race in the workplace he said:

I think a Korean-American male working in Corporate America...[has] to prove [himself] even more than a white person, a white male....I don't

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<sup>19</sup> Interview #11

<sup>20</sup> Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (1998): 7.

think they respect you as much if you're Asian....You know I noticed [who the partners and executives were] and it did impact my work life. Sometimes you feel like it's unfair. You're doing just as much as another person is but he or she is getting the promotion and you don't.<sup>21</sup>

Charles, who has achieved director status at a Fortune 500 company, shared how he too feels the need to work harder than his peers in order to stand out and prove himself. He discloses that for a recent presentation he and a white female colleague gave, he had to do all of the "heavy lifting" preparing the presentation while she hadn't "lifted a finger."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, both Charles and Michael note that they work against Asian American stereotypes that depict them as the hard worker who doesn't "rock the boat"<sup>23</sup> and is not the "finance guy."<sup>24</sup> Charles feels that he needs to go as far as making jokes about Asians to break the stereotype his colleagues may hold so that it helps to make them more comfortable and relaxed around his presence.

Several men in their thirties pointed out the difficulty of breaking into the upper ranks. I initially asked them if they had observed many Asian Americans in upper administration to which they all responded that they had seen very little. When I asked them why they thought this was so, they pointed to various reasons. Isaiah, who is also at the director level and wants to be president someday of a company, noted that he did not know of many Asian Americans

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<sup>21</sup> Interview #8

<sup>22</sup> Interview #13

<sup>23</sup> Interview #8

<sup>24</sup> Interview #7

who had climbed their way up the “corporate ladder working for ‘the man’.” Additionally, when Asian Americans were in the upper echelon, it was because of either having started their own company or having worked their way up in ethnic-specific niches and institutions.<sup>25</sup> He could only give me one example of an Asian American male that had achieved a VP position at Microsoft. Asking him to explain why this was so, he reasoned that the relative newness of Asian immigration has prevented an older and experienced critical mass from forming. That is, because Asians have not been here long enough and are only in their “forties and fifties” now, this prevents them from advancing. Yet research from an executive research and consulting firm seems to debunk the idea of youthfulness as a deterrent for corporate advancement. Their research reveals that in 2008, anywhere from seventy-seven to eighty-two percent of the CEOs of the S & P 500 companies were in these two age brackets with the average age in their mid-50s.<sup>26</sup>

Charles reasons differently, implying that one’s ability to blend into the dominant culture is what may be the key to advancement. He notices that the Asian American male in his company who has achieved upper level status could “almost be white.” He detailed how the way he talks, his background,

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<sup>25</sup> Interview #7

<sup>26</sup> “Leading CEOs: A Statistical Snapshot of S&P 500 Leaders,” Spencer Stuart, <http://www.spencerstuart.com/research/articles/975/> (accessed August 10, 2011).

and his mannerisms make him look like he's a "part of the white community."<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, Charles offers that his company nurtures a fraternity feel where coming from a "certain school" and having a "certain background" puts you in a "club":

So a lot of [being in the club] is [because of] your reputation, your relationship with the uppers, people that are in upper management. And a lot of it is like, yeah, a lot of white people (chuckle).<sup>28</sup>

He further mentioned that the graduate school you attended also puts you in a favorable position with those already in the club. When I asked him if Asians have attended these schools, he replied affirmatively that they have and yet have been passed over for promotion for upper management or administration positions or worse, have been demoted for no apparent reason.

Michael pointed out the racial disparity of upper administration at his company:

You can see...who the partners are and what race they are, the directors, and for the most part, they are not Asian. There are more non-Asian executives or [those in] leadership roles.<sup>29</sup>

He shared the belief that while people want to hire persons who are "good at what they do," "knowledgeable" and "hard workers," he also pointed to what sociologists call the homophily principle,<sup>30</sup> the idea that people like to be with

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<sup>27</sup> Interview #13

<sup>28</sup> Interview #13

<sup>29</sup> Interview #8

<sup>30</sup> Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001): 415-44.



people who are most like themselves, summed up best in the adage, “birds of a feather flock together”:

The people making those decisions [to hire], they choose people that they are comfortable with, that they can relate to and sometimes, I agree it's easier to relate to your own kind.<sup>31</sup>

While it is reasonable to want to work with people you have commonalities with, it becomes an issue of justice and equality of access when those at the top who have the power to hire and promote are different than oneself particularly in race and ethnic culture, and yet similar to each other. The homophily principle and social capital theory work hand in hand to deter those who want to, from readily entering the elite tiers.

Abe, who works in the public sector, finds that one's reputation is perhaps the most important factor in upward movement.<sup>32</sup> Because promotion in his line of work weighs heavily upon recommendations, it behooves employees to build up their resume by working hard and showing extra effort beyond scheduled work hours. Poor performance casts a large shadow over a person's reputation almost certainly prohibiting one from any promotions. Though Abe reasons that there is less “club” mentality now than there was previously by superiors when an employee goes for promotion, it appears that reputation could still function in such capacity, especially in light of the aforementioned social capital theory. Caricatures of employees still travel by

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<sup>31</sup> Interview #8

<sup>32</sup> Interview #14

“word of mouth” thus making who you know, or at the least, who knows you, a major resource. Furthermore, Abe argues that one’s ability to acquire inside knowledge about the procedures and the protocol of becoming an employee in his work benefits entry-level persons. Though this knowledge is often offered by his superiors, Asian Americans do not take advantage of this resource because they hardly know anyone in his line of work and thus are unaware of this capital. Therefore, while this inside information is available, according to Abe, Asian Americans have little access to it which produces a lack of what Pierre Bourdieu calls “cultural capital,” acquired knowledge that results in improved status and power.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, one sees how a person’s low social capital negatively affects one’s cultural capital.

### *Dating and Social Status*

Another area where Asian American men may find themselves at a disadvantage is social status and dating. Though contested,<sup>34</sup> hypergamy theory (i.e., marrying up) suggests that Asian American women have a higher likelihood of advancing in social standing through marriage than do Asian

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<sup>33</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986); Chris Barker, "Cultural Capital," in *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 37.

<sup>34</sup> Colleen Fong and Judy Yung argue that people date and marry interracially for many reasons, not only on account of social status and capital. See Colleen Fong and Judy Yung, "In Search of the Right Spouse: Interracial Marriage among Chinese and Japanese Americans," *Amerasia Journal* 21, no. 3 (1995/1996): 77-98.

American men.<sup>35</sup> The theory argues that in interracial marriages, persons will marry to “maximize their status by marrying the most advantaged individual with the highest racial status.”<sup>36</sup> It is argued however that Asian American men do not carry the same social capital that Asian American women do and as a result, have a more difficult time marrying interracially, particularly with white women.<sup>37</sup>

When dating and relationships came up in the interviews, I was curious to see how the men viewed themselves in terms of race: “How do you see race playing into your dating relationships?” The men in their twenties saw that race was not a significant factor when it came to interracial dating. It is important to note that their reflections considered several factors including society, parents, and their own preference. A few of the men pointed out that American society is more accepting of Asian American men dating non-Asian American, most notably, white American women. Jimmy and Chris both mentioned that the Asian American male is now more socially accepted and even has a growing social appeal. Jimmy observes that Korean American men are seen by non-Korean American women as “very caring, very generous and very thoughtful, the ideal guy essentially...completely the opposite” of a

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<sup>35</sup> Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 264-65.

<sup>36</sup> Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 264-65.

<sup>37</sup> Larry Hajime Shinagawa and Gin Yong Pang, “Asian American Panethnicity and Intermarriage,” *Amerasia Journal* 22, no. 2 (1996): 127-52; Kumiko Nemoto, “Climbing the Hierarchy of Masculinity: Asian American Men’s Cross-Racial Competition for Intimacy with White Women,” *Gender Issues* 25, no. 2 (2008): 80-100.

Korean American woman's perspective.<sup>38</sup> Chris shares a similar reflection stating that Asian men in America are seen more positively, basing this upon a recent surge in pop-culture:

I mean you see more and more Asians, popular authors, actors, [and] singers coming up and having a much more positive influence for Asian males not only in America but around the globe. You know Rain?<sup>39</sup> You know he was considered the most influential person of 2008 or something like that. And you know you have actors like John Cho...[and] Daniel Henney who's considered to be one of the sexiest men alive...And you know, he's Korean American or part Korean-American and part Caucasian I believe. I think slowly those racial lines are coming to a close but it is a slow and steady process that's happening even now.<sup>40</sup>

What made Chris' remarks interesting is that he prefaced the above quote sharing that "a lot of times, society did give us Asian men a more negative and sometimes, even a more homosexual image."<sup>41</sup> He brought up a magazine that ran a centerfold article with a controversial heading "Metrosexual or Homosexual?" in reference to Asian males. Chris argued that by framing the headline in such a way, the article was posing a false binary script of the Asian male as either [metrosexual] or gay without any possibility of him as a heterosexual normative masculine person. John said something similar when he was explaining why he thought Asian males rank near the bottom in social

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<sup>38</sup> Interview #10

<sup>39</sup> A Korean pop-star, Rain, was included in a 2006 *Time* magazine article as being one of the hundred most influential persons of the year. He was also voted as one of *People* magazine's hundred most beautiful persons in the world in 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Interview #11

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

standing. “I think I put them near the bottom somewhere...because I think they are the least...aren’t they like asexual, Asian guys that are...just not desirable in any way?”<sup>42</sup>

When the men in their twenties discussed interracial dating in terms of their parents’ preferences, they shared that although they understand their parents’ desires for them to marry a Korean woman, their parents are beginning to be more flexible as these men have slowly begun to date non-Koreans. Moreover, they reason that because society has become more accepting of interracial dating, their parents too have altered their thinking to reflect this shift. Lastly, these men also do not see race as an issue in terms of their personal preference. Chris mentions that an ideal woman would be of no particular race, naming examples of Hollywood stars from various races to demonstrate his own impartiality and society’s non-discriminatory preferences of beauty.

The men over thirty (and one in his twenties) however tell a slightly different narrative. While they do not hold to personal racial preferences (i.e., they would date women of various races), one’s cultural tradition is a growing realization of importance to these men, particularly as they think beyond dating to marriage. Interestingly, all of the married men had Korean American spouses again, possibly explained by the culture argument—their spouses

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<sup>42</sup> Interview #3

would understand their own background better if they too grew up Korean American.

Though cultural reasons appear to be valid rationale in explaining the restriction of Asian American men to ethnic-specific relations, another reason arose out the interviews: they simply couldn't on account of perception (society's and their own) and social barriers. A few of them went as far as to share that dating white American women vaults their social status. As I talked to Isaiah about race and dating and whether he believed Asian American males have equal opportunity to interracial date, he offered that "the Asian male, as a lot of us know, just has a stigma from the media, from the movies" which creates a large social hurdle to overcome.<sup>43</sup> The Asian male stigma consists of the:

Kind of nerdy, small, Asian guy. You know he's good at math or good at some science thing but you know, not the cool guy. Not the main character right? He's always the sidekick, starting you know with Bruce Lee and the Green Hornet and you know, *The Hangover*. The guy [in *The Hangover* is] just like a goof and [he carries] all of the different stereotypes, thus the reason why the attractive white female is the Holy Grail of dating.<sup>44</sup>

I asked him if this status exists more with a white woman than if he were to date a Korean American woman.

Isaiah: I hate to rate but...if the Korean girl's an eight and the white girl's a seven, I might take the white girl just because...that's almost a trophy girlfriend right? Like, "Hey, I can do this."

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<sup>43</sup> Interview #7

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Mark: Like you've made it?

Isaiah: Right...that's the pinnacle for the Asian guy....To be able to date a good-looking white girl...means that she's foregone all the other frat boys or other guys that she's used to growing up with and seeing. And there is still another caveat. You can't be a whitewashed, can't-speak-any-other-language Asian guy. You can't just be a white-bread Asian guy....For me it only counts if you actually have some culture in you...because that girl would have to accept all of that, you know? She would have to accept the fact that you're not a third or fourth generation who speaks no language, you just look different. You have a parent that doesn't speak English and that she would have to try to be able to communicate with your parents, with your family members. Or imagine her at a family function....So to be able to find that girl and package her up as a good-looking girl that wants to date *you*, that's a big achievement.<sup>45</sup>

Ken too shared the effects social stereotypes have upon Asian American men, particularly in the area of physical anatomy and masculinity. I inquired why he thought a "big penis," his symbol of masculinity, was such a significant feature in society.

Mark: Why do you think penis size is such a big thing in society? I mean why do you think that is the standard for most men...and not say, height or hand size?

Ken: Yeah I think height is another one. There is definitely a discrimination [towards] height here especially in the United States. And that's why I think the Asian man struggles so much in his masculinity compared to other [races].

Mark: Because of physical outward appearances?

Ken: Yeah because we're stereotyped as having small penises and being shorter than most other guys. So in that case, nobody wants to date an Asian male...I think you see that. You see a lot of Asian women dating men from other [races] but not the other way around. You see it but not that often; but I think I've seen it more often these days. I read an article in *Time* magazine where the title was, "Asian Men are on a Roll" and there was a picture of an

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<sup>45</sup> Interview #7

Asian guy with a white girl.<sup>46</sup> They were talking about how more and more women are finding Asian men to be the ideal partner.

Mark: How did that make you feel when you read that?

Ken: I was like, "Yeah!" (emphatically)...But I grew up with that stereotype...that I am an Asian and can only date other Asian women [and that] I'm not attractive to other cultures [or] other women from other ethnicities....Or like my friend, he said he dated a white girl and I was like, "Wow! You dated a white girl?"

Mark: He was Asian?

Ken: Yeah he was Asian. He was short too....I was like, "How did you pull that off dude?" I would love to date a white girl one time.<sup>47</sup>

John, in his twenties, reasons similarly that the lack of Asian male-white female dyadic relations is due to the perception of Asian males:

My cousin was telling me about a project he did when he was in college, something about the way Asian males are perceived...as being the least masculine males....Just the fact that you don't see the Asian guys with the white girls...says something about the way Asians perceive themselves or are perceived. So I just feel like there's girls that just would never go out with Asian guys.<sup>48</sup>

Charles, now married to a Korean American woman, grew up dating exclusively non-Korean American girls and more specifically white girls because doing so would confirm that he was different than other Korean Americans. This self-confirmation was particularly strong for Charles as he spent the majority of his life trying to prove himself amongst his friends. He admits that part of trying to date white girls was his rejection of anything

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<sup>46</sup> Esther Pan, "Why Asian Guys Are on a Roll," *Newsweek*, February 21, 2000, 50-51.

<sup>47</sup> Interview #4

<sup>48</sup> Interview #3



Korean. Yet listening to him narrate his life story, it also appears that he needed validation and confirmation from society outside of Korean America concerning his social status, particularly as he moved from Koreatown to a predominantly white suburb right before junior high school.

Charles: Throughout junior high and high school...I wanted to be associated with white girls....

Mark: When you had a white girlfriend or you hung out with white girls, what did that do for you?

Charles: It made me feel like a man (chuckle).

Mark: As opposed to if you would've dated a Korean girl?

Charles: Yeah. To me, Korean girls weren't...as womanly as white girls. White girls were already...developed. You know they had bigger breasts....They were just more beautiful to me. Koreans were like, kind of weak, not attractive....I wanted to be associated apart from [the Korean crowd]. I didn't want to be like them because to me, they were just like another mold. They didn't stand out. I always wanted to stand out....I always felt inferior. I always knew I could never bring [a white girl] home and like my parents could have a normal conversation. It was always because of what other people, how other people saw me or felt about me. It was always [people's perception of me that] was more important than the relationship.<sup>49</sup>

While the Glass Ceiling and hypergamy theories are contestable, they appear plausible in light of the history of Asian men in America and the social standing they appear to hold as analyzed in the interviews. Yen Le Espiritu cautions however that while in a racialized context where Asian American men have historically and systematically been disadvantaged, they should also be studied by scholars as simultaneously holding both subordination and

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<sup>49</sup> Interview #13

domination within U.S. society.<sup>50</sup> It is observable from the interviews that on the one hand, Korean American men in later life stages, view society's perception of themselves as relatively insignificant compared to other racial men. Yet they too are not without some measure of social power and status. Various research partners for instance, implicitly point out the lesser status of Asian American and Korean American women in the workplace, society, and the family sphere. They point out that Asian Americans in upper company leadership levels are usually men (though they observe that this is changing to the benefit of Asian American women). Furthermore, the language some of the men used to speak about Korean American women when the interview turned to the topic of dating appeared to depict women as objects instead of subjects. The dilemma then for critical (pro)feminists is to narrate the simultaneous story of agency and oppression in such a way that works for the freedom of all.

#### Gender Ideology and Construction of the Men at Christ Church

Gender performance and ideology are two sides of the same coin. Furthermore there are two ways to view the relationship between performance and ideology. On the one hand, men act out their ideas of masculinity and in doing so, "perform" their held beliefs about what is masculine or manly. These performances in turn reinforce their ideas, particularly if they are socially affirmed by others. Gender ideology and gender performance are part of a

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<sup>50</sup> Espiritu, "All Men," 42.

reinforcing loop. These beliefs are constructed over the course of a lifetime and have many influencers including (though not exhaustive) tradition, religious values and practices, parents, friends, and media.

On the other hand, one might argue that the second approach is more simple in its logic and yet, ironically, perhaps more difficult to grasp. Whatever persons of the male sex do and however they act, constructs masculinity. There are no preset qualities to masculinity (e.g., aggression, strength) as there are to femininity (e.g., passive, soft) thus rendering gender as both performance and construction. In this approach, masculinity is better understood as *masculinities* for there are myriad possibilities for gender performance and therefore gender construction and ideology. A man who is both sensitive and aggressive is performing his version of masculinity while at the same time constructing another idea of masculinity.

Keeping this distinction in mind, I was curious to know what the men at Christ Church thought about masculinity and manhood. Additionally I wanted to find out where they received these ideas and how they were performing it.<sup>51</sup> I asked each of the men in preparation for our interview, to speak about a symbol that describes their idea of masculinity. The symbols varied with the phallus garnering the most mention (three).<sup>52</sup> Although this number seems

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<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 4 for a specific example (playing football) of gender performance by Korean American men.

<sup>52</sup> The symbols include: phallus, hammer, watch, fishing hook, dog house, lion, toolbox, soju (Korean alcohol), athleticism, stick-shift car, rock,

rather small to be of any significance, when I asked why the phallus was their chosen symbol, their reasoning correlated with a common explanation found in other symbols: strength.<sup>53</sup> Whether the symbol was a phallus, lion, hairy body, etc., strength and its adjectival form (strong) appeared in seven of the men's reflections as the main descriptor for masculinity. A few viewed strength in terms of physical power; most of the men however saw it in terms of an inner strength or a capacity for performance. One man reasoned that athleticism shows one physical abilities and capabilities. Four of the men reasoned that strength is the ability to keep one's life or a man's family's life together while preventing it from falling apart. When the ideas of care and provision (especially for one's family and significant others) were taken into account, the number expanded to eleven of the fifteen men. One man brought a guitar pick as a reminder of his father, a musician, who was able to provide financially not only for his immediate family, but also his extended family. He, through his savings from a music academy in Korea, was able to finance the immigration of his wife and relatives while also paying for a portion of his brother's medical bills. Another man brought a DVD of a father and his quadriplegic son who

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guitar pick, women, bodily hair, and a DVD about a father and quadriplegic son's relationship. Two persons did not have a concrete symbol but spoke about qualities (i.e., athleticism, stability of life). Several others had more than one symbol.

<sup>53</sup> Sexually satisfying one's partner was the lone exception to the explanation of the phallus as a symbol of masculinity.

compete together in ironman triathlons to highlight compassion, accomplishment, and perseverance in a father and son relationship.

Similarly, several of the men shared the idea of stability or reliability. One man spoke of Russell Crowe's character in the movie *Gladiator* as a person who has that "inner strength" and does not fall to the whims of others.<sup>54</sup> He carries himself with confidence that keeps him from seeking the approval of others as does the antagonist in the film. He is a person that leads and upon whom others look for guidance and inspiration.

There was one man whose explanation of strength deserves mentioning because unlike the others' favorable view, it carries a negative quality. Eric shared a hammer as his symbol and explicated that a hammer is strong and unbending:

It creates an imprint on something else. It exercises its influence through violence, through contact and by molding other objects. It makes other things fit together when things don't naturally fit. It in itself...quite remarkably isn't actually warped, distorted, or changed by its work....The hammer is never itself traumatized or fundamentally changed in its shape or function.<sup>55</sup>

It should be noted that later in the interview, Eric would unmistakably declare that he is not a hammer—the image he was surrounded with and encouraged to emulate growing up—but clay, for he feels like he needs to be shaped daily into a form that has positive impact and meaning.

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<sup>54</sup> Interview #5

<sup>55</sup> Interview #1

Another idea closely related to performance had to do with one's ability to create or to fix. One man shared that he was impressed as a young boy with his father's prowess to build an unconventional, portable dog house. He commented about his father's creativity to build something from scratch and as a result of this, compared his father's superior abilities to his friends' fathers. A second man talked about a toolbox for he saw his father fix a lot of items not only in their own house, but also in his father's friends' homes.

Finally, there were two symbols that signified one's coming into manhood, a rite of passage of sorts. Ryan talked about a watch his parents gave him when he turned twenty-one. What stood out for Ryan is how he was entrusted with something of considerable value ("not one of these things that is less than a hundred dollars, like Fossil or Swatch").<sup>56</sup> Ryan felt that when he received the watch, he needed to become more responsible in caring for himself and others.

Rodney shared that a bottle of soju (alcohol) was a sign of a boy's transition into manhood. He reasons that when a boy is allowed to drink with older men, has the ability to hold great amounts of liquor, and drinks with proper etiquette (e.g., drinking to the side in the midst of elders or older brothers, pouring with two hands), he sheds his identity as a boy and now becomes a man.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Interview #2

<sup>57</sup> Interview #15

As I asked these men where they received these ideas of masculinity and manhood, most of them mentioned their fathers or older men such as their uncles, as the most influential reason. A second influence was society. When I asked them to give examples of this, they offered their friends and media forms such as television and movies. Finally as we began to discuss the question on spirituality (Chapter 3), the majority of the men offered that the Bible has had a large influence in shaping their masculinity.

### Becoming Men amidst Patriarchy and Violence

Feminist theory argues that with the exception of a few tribes and cultures, the social world is largely patriarchal and phallocentric. Systems and structures reflect an embedded bias towards men and their male progeny. This is witnessed in modern society as men control much of the public sphere holding positions of authority and power (e.g., *all* U.S. presidents have been male) at significantly higher levels than women. There are advantages for men who live in patriarchal societies including the ability to determine the norm. That is, they offer their viewpoint as the standard while not having to socially locate their own selves in their research and writing so as to become aware that their experiences and reasoning are not the same as others, particularly women.<sup>58</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg's research on moral development is one example that illustrates the privilege patriarchy has in producing normativity.

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<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Dodson Gray, *Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap* (Wellesley, MA: Roundtable Press, 1982), 47-77.

Following his research that studied moral decision-making in persons, Kohlberg came up with six stages to represent the growth and maturation that occurs through each phase. Carol Gilligan, a younger colleague of Kohlberg, would later call into question Kohlberg's methodology noting that all of his test subjects were males. Gilligan would later find through her own research that women reason differently than men in terms of morality. Gilligan would name this moral reasoning an "ethic of responsibility and care" and through her research, would show how 'normative' research prior to the development of feminist critique, was in actuality biased.<sup>59</sup>

On account of this privilege, it behooves men and young boys to perpetuate this system. One way to enable it is to reap the spoils. Men in the workplace, in the public sphere, and at home have enjoyed an unequal advantage (i.e., access to resources) to that of women. A second way to continue patriarchy is to not disclose it. An inability or an unwillingness to see the structures and dynamics of patriarchy in/advertently carries on what currently exists and in this sense, becomes a conceptual trap.<sup>60</sup> A person is so far in that he or she does not have the ability to see what they are in or the capacity to get out of it.

While patriarchy, to the disadvantage of women, extends a gross advantage to men, Michael Kaufman argues that patriarchy untended, leads to

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<sup>59</sup> Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*.

<sup>60</sup> Gray, *Patriarchy*.



three kinds of violence for men and society.<sup>61</sup> He contends as do other social theorists, that patriarchy is a matter of social and positional power and that on account of this, often leads to violence towards women, other men, and one's own self.

First, Kaufman asserts that the rape of a woman (a good example of patriarchy as social power) is more about issues of power and less about the playing out of sexual fantasy or physical sex. Having analyzed various testimonies of rapists, Kaufman notes that many of these men who felt socially powerless were drawn to physical violence as a way to demonstrate their power and attain some measure of control and authority. "Violence against women can become a means of trying to affirm [a man's] personal power"<sup>62</sup> in an ideological structure (i.e., patriarchy) that differentiates masculine from feminine qualities and castigates those men who do not exhibit these to the extent that is socially acceptable. Thus the act of violence towards women is concurrently an attempt at social empowerment and a demonstration of the fragility of masculinity.<sup>63</sup> A "man may still retrieve the ultimate tool of manly self-assertiveness: omnipotence through violence."<sup>64</sup> Moreover, this sense of feeling powerful is increased when achieved through group approval (e.g., the

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<sup>61</sup> Michael Kaufman, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence," in *Men's Lives*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 4-17.

<sup>62</sup> Kaufman, "Construction," 4-17.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Suzanne E. Hatty, *Masculinities, Violence and Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 6.

subculture of college fraternities and their views towards women and their bodies).<sup>65</sup>

Second, men commit violence towards other men. If social power for men is positional—that is, my identity as a man is defined in relation to other persons, particularly men—then the potential for competition and posturing increases. If a man can prove himself ‘masculine’ (i.e., hegemonic masculinity) then other men become potential ‘contributors’ to this project whether by group approval or by defeat. I become a man either through your approval or by overcoming you or both (learner overcoming the master). To overcome another man is to prove one’s potency. This is witnessed everyday at the local gym when strangers and friends who get together to play a game of pick-up basketball ‘one-up’ each other and try to make the other look bad in front of onlookers. Empowerment, however, that comes through approval is not necessarily violent or destructive (e.g., help groups). However, when the approval comes as a result of harm done to others such as fraternal endorsement of a brother who ‘hooks up,’ ‘gets some,’ or ‘hits that’<sup>66</sup> with an unknown woman at a party, it reinforces a patriarchal system that engenders various forms of violence.

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<sup>65</sup> A. Ayres Boswell and Joan Z. Spade, "Fraternities and Collegiate Rape Culture: Why are Some Fraternities More Dangerous Places for Women?," in *Men's Lives*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998).

<sup>66</sup> These terms are colloquialisms for having sex.

By committing these various forms of violence towards women and other men, men ironically, commit acts of self-violence. This third form of violence is the result of living in a patriarchal society that privileges males (especially hegemonic men) and sets up a destructive sex-gender system that leaves men feeling inadequate and isolated when they do not meet that script. Because one is born a male (biological sex), he is to become a man (gender), a tough, rugged, unemotional, virile, and rational individual.

For Korean and Asian American men these common issues for men in society become even more complex on account of race. As society has historically scripted racial and gender stereotypes for Asian American men (see Chapter 2), these scripts have disempowered men by setting up a construct that further marginalizes them from a normative account of the masculine. Asian American men have often been emasculated and feminized, thus taking a considerable part of the normative script (i.e., sexual virility) away from these men. Furthermore, for some, cultural scripting of filial piety and self-abnegation contributes to additional feelings of disempowerment.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, if one feels powerless in an ideological structure (patriarchy) that supposes one's ascent to privilege and power, the one who falls short of that normative script will look for it through other avenues. I contend that for

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<sup>67</sup> William M. Liu, "Exploring the Lives of Asian American Men: Racial Identity, Male Role Norms, Gender Role Conflict, and Prejudicial Attitudes," in *College Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research, and Implications for Practice*, ed. Shaun R. Harper and Frank Harris III (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010). 415-33.

Korean American men this occurs primarily in the private sphere but also in the public cultural and social sphere (i.e. when Korean Americans organize informally or formally) where a Confucian belief system based upon the privileging of male over female and older over younger, provides an alternative option to the scripts they are often funneled into “playing” in their workplaces and society. Consequently, when there is a lack of control and agency, the bodies of women<sup>68</sup> and of men (both their own and others) become sites of control.<sup>69</sup> As patriarchy and sexism distort the relationality of human beings, preventing women from self-actualization, it too disfigures the humanity of men and their ability to become self-acting agents.<sup>70</sup>

The idea of control and agency was a recurrent theme in the interviews, particularly as it had to do with the relationship between the men and their fathers. According to the men, most fathers exhibited some form of control over their lives through physical punishment, emotional trauma, or fear. Eric recalls a tumultuous upbringing aimed primarily at helping him succeed in the “public sphere [that] held very high stakes.”<sup>71</sup> According to Eric for instance, learning to play an instrument was not an endeavor to appreciate music or to

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<sup>68</sup> Hee-Kyu Park, “The Silver Dagger in Evangelical Korean American Women’s Lives: Exploring the Cultural, Religious and Psychological Hybridity of Korean American Woman’s Premarital Sexuality,” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion Western Region, Whittier, CA, March 27, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>70</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 178.

<sup>71</sup> Interview #1

learn a musical skill. Rather it was to “succeed in a violent competition” that would one day see him attain a “life unthreatened by poverty,” especially poignant for immigrant parents who were “very anxious about surviving in America.” His parents believed that beating others in competition and being the best among his peers would help him in life. Later in the interview, Eric shared how his father’s own internal racism and self-loathing caused him to disallow Eric from speaking Korean at home or improper grammatical English in his presence:

He would feign misunderstanding. He would just say, “I can’t understand what you’re telling me,” you know with me being nine or ten years old at the time. “I can’t understand what you’re saying because you used a dependent clause improperly in that sentence.” I’d have to repeat everything I said.<sup>72</sup>

Paul shares a similar story of childhood struggle as his father, who thought Paul was too soft in character, used sports as a ploy to toughen him up:

Weekends I would have to wake up at five o’clock and play tennis with him for a few hours before coming home for the rest of my day...and it was grueling. It wasn’t even like a match. We might play a match but then after a certain point, if I wasn’t playing well or I screwed up in something, he’d get pissed. And then I would have to do constant drills with him until I got it right. And it...wasn’t encouraging. It was yelling at me and calling me things like, “You’re an idiot” or whatever, just a lot of those kinds of insults....I know that he didn’t really think of me as an idiot but I know what he was trying to do. He was trying to piss me off to the point where I developed that aggression and do what he wanted me to do.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Interview #1

<sup>73</sup> Interview #5

When I asked Paul why he thought it was so important to his father to toughen him up and make him aggressive, Paul shared that having that attitude was the way his father survived his own parentless childhood and achieved some measure of life success.

Still others shared how their father's harsh physical punishment and exhibits of great emotional anger would instill fear in them. These demonstrations were all the more distressing because rarely, if at all, did their fathers follow up with any verbal communication. Furthermore, many offered that their parents were gone so much due to work, that they rarely had any parental guidance. Several shared that their grandmothers were the primary caregivers and when their fathers were involved, it was usually on account of disciplinary measures. Though the majority of the men who received physical discipline admitted their wrong-doing thus acknowledging why they were being punished, only one man shared that his father said "sorry" for having to discipline him in such manner.<sup>74</sup> Most of the men would have liked for their parents to have verbally communicated more:

I understood sometimes why I got punished because I did a lot of stupid things. But you know, sometimes I got spanked or hit or whatever and I would have liked to understand why. But my parents never explained stuff.<sup>75</sup>

Additionally, their fathers' great displays of anger occurred more frequently than the rare expressions of positive emotion. Several witnessed a polarity

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<sup>74</sup> Interview #15

<sup>75</sup> Interview #14

between extreme anger and a reservation of words. Laura Uba, writing about Asian American family dynamics, states that self-control of emotions, harmony, and reservation of words are values for which traditional Asian American families often strive.<sup>76</sup> While the men's families of origin appear to have taught these values indirectly, they were also broken by their fathers' enormous displays of negative emotion and overbearing control.

Sadly, the men with these family upbringings have not gone unscathed. Eric's life has been a journey of figuring himself out and gaining self-agency and actualization. He confesses that even in his mid-thirties, "I still haven't figured myself out."<sup>77</sup> In his purview, he realized beginning in his mid-twenties that:

I needed the freedom in life to continue to change; to make decisions and realize they were wrong; to have the convictions and have the freedom to change them because I recognize [that they] didn't hold true for me anymore; to take a stance against for instance, my parents or against institutions that I had grown up within and be able to change that stance.<sup>78</sup>

Eric, speaking about the eroding relationship between he and his father, would later declare with a small group of persons that "our roads had to diverge because he could not accept the person I was becoming."<sup>79</sup> He would go on to share that he told his father in somewhat of an act of self-definition that "you

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<sup>76</sup> Laura Uba, *Asian Americans: Personality Patterns, Identity, and Mental Health* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), 34-38.

<sup>77</sup> Interview #1

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Field notes, May 1, 2011.

take the worst in me and bring it out and you take the best in me and stomp it out.”<sup>80</sup>

One could characterize Charles’ life also as a journey towards self-definition and gaining control. His teenage years were plagued by a search for acceptance and identity. This search eventually turned to a use of hard drugs and promiscuity, where he admitted to “messing up a lot of lives.”<sup>81</sup> While in his mid-twenties he attended a conference that helped him explore and heal many issues related to his family of origin, he still deals with the tenuous relationship between his parents and him. As Charles exercises one aspect of filial piety, giving his parents money on a regular basis, it has become an area of tension for him. “I hate giving you money” Charles would share to a group of men about what he told his parents. He would later add, “I don’t know what living in a way where we love each other in a healthy way [looks like].”<sup>82</sup>

Michael had several run-ins with the law during his early twenties. He “got into drugs and alcohol and being promiscuous. You know just to the point where that’s the only thing that kind of made me happy and so I did it even more.”<sup>83</sup> He dabbled in a gang and was eventually incarcerated for driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol. After he seemed to have put his life back together some, he was arrested for a second DUI and because he had a job,

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<sup>80</sup> Field notes, May 1, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Interview #13

<sup>82</sup> Field notes, May 1, 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Interview #8



was put on house arrest, needing to wear an ankle bracelet in order for law enforcement to monitor his whereabouts.

Abe, now in his late thirties, seems to have come to a place of self-definition and control. This has not always been the case however as he wished there was more trust shown by his parents during his child and teenage years. He alludes to how he was never allowed to play certain sports as an illustration of his parents' fear for his safety which he believes prevented him from learning how to deal with his mistakes:

As a child, I feel like you don't understand things and then you kind of grow up into an adult and you're like, uh, you know you're insecure about certain things. I feel like I forced myself to overcome these fears because my parents instilled these fears in me. "Oh you get hurt in sports," and so I only played sports where we didn't have a bat....So my parents were really, really overly cautious....I feel like my parents should have let me fall on my face a few times and I think if I had learned that early it would have been easier for me to have accepted failure when I was growing up.<sup>84</sup>

He would go on to share that while he was a good student, he had no idea how to handle the failure he faced when he got kicked out of school.

Self-control and self-actualization are key concepts for Tony's view of masculinity and manhood. In his words, having "your shit together" and knowing that you can take care of important responsibilities such as a family, defines a man.<sup>85</sup> It was when he was in the military that he felt he had his act together the most and began to come into his own sense of manhood. It was

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<sup>84</sup> Interview #14

<sup>85</sup> Interview #12

the first time he was living away from home on his own. It was the first time he had to think about racism. Sixteen year olds in the rural areas of the South made an impression upon him as they took care of their younger siblings, ran farms, and cared for the family when their fathers got sick. Moreover, he was empowered by the awards he received for his high performance and felt great responsibility being entrusted with powerful weaponry:

You're like *that* young and are given so much power....You know, they're giving you live weapons and they're like making you, putting you in charge of people's lives. It's a big deal. And it gives you that responsibility whether you [take advantage of it] or [not]. For me, I [took advantage of] it.<sup>86</sup>

Brian's story is a little different in that he wishes his father would have brought a different quality of leadership and presence with the family. His disappointment in his father is clearly evident when he speaks about his father's lack of modeling maturity to his sons as he "cusses in Korean," fights with his wife frequently, and is not "responsible with his work."<sup>87</sup>

Communication and language issues are also a source of distance between Brian and his father. He was embarrassed of his father growing up in part because of his father's broken English. Furthermore, the lack of healthy conversation and relational modeling between his parents seems to have weighed upon him. When I asked Brian what he wanted to have heard or seen from his father if language was not a barrier, he replied:

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<sup>86</sup> Interview #12

<sup>87</sup> Interview #6

I would have liked to have seen...my parents really enjoying each other's company. That's what I really wanted to see. That they were, even though we go through different struggles, they would be, "Hey, I do care for you." More than my mom or dad saying that they love [me], I'd rather see them saying that they love each other. I think that'd be more important to me.<sup>88</sup>

Learned violence and aggression and a lack of fatherly presence cannot be overlooked in trying to understand why the men's fathers behaved with apparent iron fists. When I asked the men why they thought their fathers acted the way they did or held stubbornly to certain (racial) beliefs, the majority of answers had to do with the way their fathers lacked any guidance themselves when they were younger. Moreover, Japanese oppression, the Korean War or their father's own military service (or any combination of the three) traumatically affected many of their fathers. Peter reasoned that his father was so narrow-minded and carried deep-seated resentment on account of Japanese oppression:

I think my dad is just a traditionalist and he's just a very closed...he comes from the wartime where Japan took over Korea and stripped him of his culture and his language. So I think there's a lot of bitterness and anger that carried through. And you know something about first-generation Korean dads having some kind of vendetta or something...some anger or the Korean card to pull out and say, "You know these people have wronged me so I deserve retribution or I can afford to make fun of people and mock them."<sup>89</sup>

Ryan also uses the Korean War to frame his father's harsh treatment of him during his childhood years:

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<sup>88</sup> Interview #6

<sup>89</sup> Interview #9

During the Korean War, my grandfather disappeared and a lot of the men disappeared. And so you [can] imagine during that time period, there [was] a...flux of men missing in this...generation's life of fathers. So we have fathers who didn't have their fathers around because of the Korean War. So my father grew up without a father; he was four or five years old when his father disappeared. He basically had to live on his own, survive on his own, and try to figure out what it is to be a man on his own [with] no one to teach him.<sup>90</sup>

Although these stories of tumult and upheaval are common among most of these men, a few told alternative stories indicating the relatively healthy relationships they have with their parents. Jimmy and John both convey that they have good relationships particularly with their fathers. In John's case, this was not always so as his father was gone a lot from the home during his childhood years. John felt that his father was disconnected from his wife and the rest of the family. However, as his father became "more committed to the faith," John reflects that his father began to change becoming more present and helpful around the house.<sup>91</sup> John's father for instance, continues to make large lunches for John even though he is a grown adult. Paul, whose father used sports to toughen him up, comments how his father has changed over the years:

For the last year, my dad has done a lot of apologizing of the way he raised me because he didn't know what he was doing....He was not good showing his affection towards his kids because he didn't have it growing up. No one showed him how to do it.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Interview #2

<sup>91</sup> Interview #3

<sup>92</sup> Field notes, May 1, 2011.

Paul would recount a fairly recent episode he had with his father to illustrate his father's new efforts. As Paul was watching football on television one Sunday afternoon, his father came over and joined him:

Dad: Hey, who do you like?

Paul: I like the Bears.

Dad: Oh yeah, why?

Paul: Because I've always liked them.

Dad: Oh yeah? Me too.<sup>93</sup>

Paul shared with great emotion how this exchange moved him since he knew that his father's favorite team was not the Bears, but the Cowboys. "It was his way of connecting with me."<sup>94</sup>

The change however was not always with the men's fathers. Abe would share that it was a realization about his father that brought him to a healthier place with his father:

I just realized maybe five years ago...how my dad loved me. My dad can't talk about [the love he has for me]. But he'll do anything you want. You wake up in the morning every day and he'll make you the same meal. It's the only meal that he knows how to make, but he'll make it every day. And [I'm] like, "What the heck dad? I don't even want it, but I'll eat it because you made it." And you know? He'll break his back for [me].<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Field notes, May 1, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Interview #14

## Conclusion

I argue in this chapter that in order to understand Korean American men more fully, one must approach masculinity in terms of construction, performance, and ideology. Korean American men, on account of the racial and gender scripts historically placed upon them by society and their families of origin, face numerous obstacles that keep them from finding deeper meaning, integration, and validation of who they are becoming as men. Furthermore, I contend that when the avenues to incorporate these aspects into their lives are limited or prohibited altogether, they will look for these in other areas, even if it harms themselves and others. The stories these men share reveal the complexity of their lives, particularly during their childhood years where the search for identity was so crucial for many of them. In the following chapter, I maintain that spirituality has served as an organizing structure for these men; many of the men turned to spirituality in order to make sense of the disarray in their lives. I also contend however that though spirituality (based largely upon American evangelicalism and Korean spirituality) has given them stability, it has also constructed gender ideologies that largely prevent men from establishing mutual relations with others.

## CHAPTER 3

### KOREAN AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY AND GENDER

#### Introduction

As I have argued to this point, Korean American men are complex beings when viewed through a feminist web or matrix of analysis. A single axis as an analytical tool does not suffice to interpret Korean American men and their quest for significance and meaning. Furthermore, for Korean American *Christian* men, the search for empowerment and significance often occurs through the additional lens of spirituality.<sup>1</sup> One might argue that Korean American spirituality presents men simultaneously with both traditional ideologies and practices of masculinity (i.e., hegemonic masculinity) and alternative views of masculinity. American evangelicalism and its ability to curb issues of gender equality through choosing selective passages and validating these through a biblical inerrancy frame, has influenced Korean American Christianity and its beliefs and practices. Unsurprisingly, the roles of theological and pastoral leader (i.e., preacher and worship leader) in Korean American churches then are predominantly filled by men. So as Korean

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<sup>1</sup> I understand spirituality as distinct from and yet including religion (the institutional and systematic organization of one's beliefs and actions about the ultimate) and theology (reflections and discourse of God) in that spirituality is one's integration of lived experiences towards her or his understanding of the ultimate. I will however use the term 'spirituality' as encompassing of all three since the spirituality I observe among these men includes religion and theology.

American men feel largely disempowered throughout society, they simultaneously find pockets of empowerment through family, social relationships, and spirituality. Yet on account of their spirituality, there are those who alter their ideology and performance of masculinity, affecting in part their social relations.

In order to build my argument, I divide the chapter into two major sections. I begin the first section with a historical and sociological exploration of the Korean American church in order to uncover its significance for Koreans in America. The latter section focuses upon the influences of Korean American spirituality, notably American evangelicalism and Korean shamanism, to get an idea of the foundational philosophical and practical pieces of Korean American spirituality. Laying this out provides a context to see gender and spirituality at work in interlocking fashion among Korean American Christian men and Korean American churches.

### The Significance of the Korean American Church

#### *Early Korean Churches in America*

Beginning with the first settlers to Hawaii and later to the west coast, the Protestant church has historically served different functions for Korean immigrants and their American-born children. Early settlers, with the help of plantation owners, set up the first Korean American church in 1903 soon after



their arrival to the islands.<sup>2</sup> The following year, a church in San Francisco was established and then again, a year later in Los Angeles.

Korean churches in the Americas were set up swiftly for several reasons. First, as many settlers were Christian—one study reports that up to forty percent of the initial immigrants came from the same Inchon church<sup>3</sup>—many of them looked for places to worship liberally. Although Christianity was a burgeoning religion in Korea, it was still a minority one with a different social system that competed with indigenous social and religious philosophies. Many, therefore, ventured across the Pacific with the belief, implanted by recruiters, that Hawaii was “heaven” and a place to practice unhindered this new-found faith.

Second, it behooved not only immigrants, but Christian recruiters and plantation owners to build these institutions. The recruitment to the islands and sustaining of Korean laborers on the plantations was facilitated by Christian ministers closely tied to American plantation businessmen. As part of the recruitment efforts of Americans, ministers lured persons they previously converted to Christianity for labor, which as David K. Yoo argues,

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<sup>2</sup> Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 35-46; Kwang Chung Kim, R. Stephen Warner, and Ho-Youn Kwon, "Korean American Religion in International Perspective," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 9; Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Su Yon Pak, et al., *Singing the Lord's Song in a New Land: Korean American Practices of Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 5.

demonstrates the inseparability of religion from geopolitical and economic interests underpinning the United States and its relations with Korea.<sup>4</sup> The recruitment of Koreans was a convoluted endeavor. Once on the island, owners built worship spaces to maintain plantation economy as they strategized that erecting worship spaces would discourage Korean laborers and their families from moving off the plantations for the cities or other higher-paying plantations. Owners believed happier, more settled Korean Christians were better workers and not as likely to leave.<sup>5</sup>

Fellowship, networking, and cultural reproduction contribute a third explanation as to why early Korean immigrants quickly established churches. After six days of tireless labor, Koreans gathered on Sunday to share life together. In addition to worship, they ate together, took part in English and Korean language classes, and participated in political planning for Korea's independence from Japan. As a result of these practices, cultural reproduction was available for both the immigrant and emerging second generations. Furthermore, it provided the first generation the skills and networking that helped to ameliorate their transition to America as Japan's annexation of Korea left immigrants as exiles in liminal space.<sup>6</sup> The difficulty of their transition abroad was complicated by their inability to return home. Thus the church became a site of solidarity and strength for Koreans in America.

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<sup>4</sup> Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 7-12.

<sup>5</sup> Patterson, *Ilse*, 56-57.

<sup>6</sup> Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 7-9.

A fourth reason Korean churches arose is because of the role religion and politics played. As American businessmen and ministers combined religion with politics, Koreans comparatively did the same, using churches as sites to become politically involved in Korea's liberation from Japan. Several church leaders held dual leadership roles within church and politics and took advantage of the institution of the church to raise funds to send to Korea and to train political leaders for the independence movement.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Post-1965 Korean American Churches*

As the discussion moves away from the early Korean American church to a post-1965 period, it is important to understand the roles the church has played according to the historical and social milieu in which it has existed. One might say that while the Korean American church still plays a political role, it addresses matters contextually. For instance, as early immigrants viewed the church as an independence-gaining institution, there are those who view reunification between North and South Korea as a focus need of the contemporary church.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, there are those of the second generation who, following the lead of white evangelicalism, believe the church should exist apolitically.<sup>9</sup> To interpret the roles of the Korean American church contextually then is to note that the perceived needs of the Korean American

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<sup>7</sup> Patterson, *Ilse*, 49.

<sup>8</sup> Pak, et al., *Singing*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Elaine Howard Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals: New Models for Civic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

community are partially informed by the different generations. The internal diversity of Korean Americans prohibits us therefore, from making definitive claims about the Korean American church.

Keeping in mind the caveat to over-generalize, contemporary works on Korean American Christianity however, provide a few possibilities for identifying preliminary themes and patterns. The issues of race, ethnicity, and discrimination and the negotiation of these by Korean Americans in their religious, civic, and social lives is one possible theme.<sup>10</sup> Antony Alumkal argues that a study of religion through the lens of race yields two responses on account of differing denominational and theological affiliation in Asian American churches.<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, Asian American churches influenced by American evangelicalism often frame the discussion of race in terms of unity and oneness in Christ. The “homogeneous unit” becomes the overriding principle through which to view differences such as race and consequently cover over these differences in the name of unity.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, mainline Asian American churches are more apt to view race and ethnicity as

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<sup>10</sup> David K. Yoo and Ruth H. Chung, eds., introduction to *Religion and Spirituality in Korean America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 5-7; Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*.

<sup>11</sup> Antony W. Alumkal, "Analyzing Race in Asian American Congregations," *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 2 (2008): 151-67.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Hearn, "Color-Blind Racism, Color-Blind Theology, and Church Practices," *Religious Education* 104, no. 3 (2009): 272-88; Alumkal, "Analyzing Race in Asian American Congregations," 159.

essential to one's religious identity; each is equally vital to the construction of one's identity and must be seen as aspects to be embraced.<sup>13</sup>

A second theme that appears to emerge consists of the notion surrounding ideas of agency, hybridity, and creativity.<sup>14</sup> The jazz term "improvisation" captures this idea best as it demonstrates Korean Americans' ability to maneuver and create using the parts they have despite the changing contexts in which they often exist.<sup>15</sup> Korean Americans continue to create and act as agents despite family, financial, and bi-cultural difficulties that cause instable realities. Sharon Kim's longitudinal study of twenty-two second-generation Korean American churches offers support for this hypothesis. Kim argues that second-generation Korean American churches in the Los Angeles area are creating "hybrid third spaces" as ways to hold their ethnic and cultural heritages while not being limited by them.<sup>16</sup> In this hybrid third space, Korean Americans negotiate multicultural and multiracial differences on account of Christianity and resist either assimilationist or pluralist theories that suggest they need to be one (Korean *or* American) or both (Korean *and* American), but not some emerging formation between the two (Korean American).

Though this concept of hybridity seems to suggest that Korean American churches—particularly those of the second generation—are

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<sup>13</sup> Russell Jeung, *Faithful Generations: Race and New Asian American Churches* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 12-15.

<sup>15</sup> Yoo and Chung, *Religion and Spirituality*, 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 13-14.

dissimilar from their earlier counterparts, one can dispute this claim pointing to the similarities that exist within contemporary Korean American churches as it did in early ones. Pyong Gap Min for instance, notes four different functions the church holds for the post-1965 immigrant generation. These are: (1) a provision of social interaction, (2) a maintenance of cultural and ethnic traditions, (3) an offering of social services such as health care and citizenship needs, and (4) a provision of social status and position.<sup>17</sup> Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim add that religious participation in Protestant churches becomes a way of life and a means to emotional well-being, personal comfort, and social belonging.<sup>18</sup>

Although these two studies give emphasis to the first generation and appear irrelevant to Sharon Kim's second generation churches, several studies allow one to conclude that perhaps first and second generation Korean American churches are more similar than dissimilar, and not too different from the early Korean American church, particularly in light of its provision of ethnic fellowship, shaping of one's ethnic identity, and safety from racial discrimination.<sup>19</sup> Rebecca Kim's sociological theories of why Korean

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<sup>17</sup> Pyong Gap Min, "The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States," *International Migration Review* 26, no. 4 (1992): 1371-72.

<sup>18</sup> Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, "Religious Participation of Korean Immigrants in the United States," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, no. 1 (1990): 22-23.

<sup>19</sup> Peter T. Cha, "Ethnic Identity Formation and Participation in Immigrant Churches: Second-Generation Korean American Experiences," in

Americans practice Christianity together in campus ministries, appears to confirm this belief.<sup>20</sup> When compared with the functional theories of both early Korean American churches and post-1965 immigrant churches, the comparisons seem rather analogous.

Moreover, one might argue that an analysis of gender and gender roles make first and second generation churches appear even more similar to one another. While this argument appears contentious given the egalitarian ideologies some second generation Korean Americans and their churches adopt, the following studies point to the inconsistency between held beliefs and practices. On the one hand, both second-generation women and men attempt to differentiate from their parents' Confucian beliefs and practices regarding gender. They do this as they strive for an increase of women's voice and presence in church leadership. For instance, members at a second-generation Korean American church in Elaine Ecklund's study desire to break

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*Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 144-52; Antony W. Alumkal, "Being Korean, Being Christian: Particularism and Universalism in a Second-Generation Congregation," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 184-86; Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*, 44-46.

<sup>20</sup> These theories are: (1) the need to belong and find meaning, (2) familiarity and attraction to the same, (3) the possibility to congregate due to a larger homogeneous mass, and (4) the capacity to attain power and status. See Rebecca Y Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?: Korean American Evangelicals on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 144-45.

down gender hierarchies by giving women more opportunities to lead.<sup>21</sup>

Second-generation Korean American evangelicals in Rebecca Kim's study also hold egalitarian gender roles that contrast the first generation. This results in women serving more freely in the ministry and pursuing occupational careers with less prohibition.<sup>22</sup> The gender roles of the second generation thus appear different from the first generation.

On the other hand, a critical feminist analysis of the various axes of power, points to the reality that both generations largely leave women out of influential leadership and adult teaching roles while relegating them to administrative roles, behind-the-scenes work, or teaching children in Sunday School.<sup>23</sup> Women do not serve in traditional and authoritatively religious roles such as pastor, worship leader, and theological educator whose leadership is often public and in the pulpit. Rather women's leadership often manifests in ministry through administrative organizing and planning, or in teaching children, who are often looked down upon within a Confucian social

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<sup>21</sup> Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*, 106-07.

<sup>22</sup> Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*, 44-45.

<sup>23</sup> Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers*; Chong, "What It Means To Be Christian"; Soyoung Park, "The Intersection of Religion, Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in the Identity Formation of Korean American Evangelical Women," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Alumkal, "Preserving Patriarchy."



hierarchy.<sup>24</sup> A second-generation Korean American woman sums up this sentiment poignantly remarking that in Korean American churches, “Women are definitely second-class citizens. There are many who don’t think women should be in positions of authority....Even in the second generation, there’s segregation between men and women.”<sup>25</sup> One of the men pointed out this same observation when he responded to my query if there was anything unique to male spirituality as opposed to female spirituality:

I mean in essence it’s the same. But I think that when it comes down to the man, it’s like, I don’t know, the men are the ones that are always preaching the Bible and giving the lessons and the stories. You know, they are the ones that are supposed to be setting the example to be godly.<sup>26</sup>

## Second-Generation Korean American Spirituality

### *A Definition of Spirituality*

Scholars have struggled to come to some consensus of what spirituality means. This may or may not come as a surprise considering that spirituality is so prolific in today’s public discourse. It seems to appear at the tips of everyone’s tongue as many acknowledge they have turned away from traditional forms of religion yet remain spiritual. Therefore, with as many persons practicing “spirituality,” whatever it may be, there is no shortage of ideas and beliefs in defining what it is. Academics too are stymied by the

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<sup>24</sup> Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*, 107; Soyoung Park, “Intersection of Religion,” 203-04.

<sup>25</sup> Chong, “What It Means to Be Christian,” 281.

<sup>26</sup> Interview #12

prospects of whether to approach it as a discipline in its own right or to consider it as a lens through which to see other theological disciplines such as theology and church history.<sup>27</sup> In this study of second-generation Korean American men and their spirituality, I find Sandra Schneider's approach helpful and the one I adopt. She views spirituality as a person's lived experience that consciously seeks life integration through self-transcendence towards one's perception of ultimate value.<sup>28</sup> As an academic discipline, spirituality therefore is the study of this life integration using an interdisciplinary method to investigate and interpret lived experiences.

What then is the ultimate value that second-generation Korean American Christians confess? Similarly, though not the same, what do their actions say about what they hold most dearly? I look to evangelical spirituality first and then make a turn to particular spiritual expressions among Korean Americans to answer these questions.

### *Evangelical Spirituality*

Evangelical spirituality, though not as old or as systematic as some forms of Catholic spirituality, does have a noteworthy history and contains common elements that reflect a theological system in spite of regional and

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<sup>27</sup> Part one of an entire volume is dedicated to this current debate. See Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows, eds., *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Schneiders, "Religion vs. Spirituality" and "Study of Christian Spirituality."

historical nuances. It was born out of the English religious movements of the 18th and 19th centuries both as a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment era and as a call for a religious response to the growing social decay brought on by the industrial revolution.<sup>29</sup> Several religious movements influenced evangelical spirituality across both centuries. The seeds of seventeenth-century Puritanism in England and later in America, emphasized through a Calvinist doctrine for instance, spiritual vitality of depraved humans, an emphasis of being “born again,” and an inner assurance of salvation.<sup>30</sup> Puritanism also introduced several practices common to evangelical spirituality including “quiet time” morning devotions, prayers before meals, and journaling as a means of confession.<sup>31</sup> Pietism’s offering of heartfelt religious experience countered Enlightenment intellectualism.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the Moravians—Count Zinzendorf and the Herrnhut community—introduced both an ecumenical ethos and moral renewal that emphasized the inner work of the Holy Spirit, gathering “Lutherans, Moravian Hussites, Calvinists, Catholics, and sectarian

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<sup>29</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 160. There is some discussion as to the beginning of evangelicalism. While those such as John Stott argue for an evangelical spirituality that was present in apostolic Christianity, others argue that, as a cultural movement, evangelical spirituality’s formative roots began in the 1700s. See James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality: From the Wesleys to John Stott* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Publishing, 1991), 7-8.

<sup>30</sup> Richard F. Lovelace, “Evangelical Spirituality: A Church Historian’s Perspective,” in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 218-19.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-20.

<sup>32</sup> Sheldrake, *Brief History*, 144.

Protestants” for confession and prayer.<sup>33</sup> Moravian spirituality in turn, played a great part in the Wesley brothers’ own spirituality. The impression of the Moravian’s faith and resilience during a turbulent seafaring trip to Georgia paved a way for John Wesley’s own religious reflections and eventually his renowned Aldersgate experience. The Moravian’s practice of the love feast and use of hymnody also made its mark upon the brothers with Charles alone having composed over 9,000 original poems and hymns.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the Wesleys’ emphasis upon the movement in one’s spiritual life towards Christian maturity and perfection as witnessed in personal piety and social compassion exhibited Puritan and Pietistic influences.

Undoubtedly these movements in England affected the Evangelical Awakening across the Atlantic in North America. Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield, two iconic figures of the 18th century Revival, contributed uniquely to evangelical spirituality. Edwards, seasoned and settled as a pastor, stressed the importance of an authenticating work of God within the life of the believer.<sup>35</sup> A conservative Calvinist, Edward’s spirituality “centered in the glory of God” and “tolerated nothing which diminished that glory or

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<sup>33</sup> Lovelace, “Evangelical Spirituality,” 221.

<sup>34</sup> Teresa Berger, *Theology in Hymns?: A Study of the Relationship of Doxology and Theology According to a Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists (1780)*, trans. Timothy E. Kimbrough (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995), 66.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality*, 42.

subtracted from the absolute sovereignty of the divine will.”<sup>36</sup> Whitfield by contrast, preached passionately and vociferously to captive audiences and made itinerancy in the vein of the Wesleys, a common practice. While his sermons may have lacked the intellectual rigor of Edwards’ addresses, Whitfield made up for it in high emotion, perhaps too much, as he was often accused of “wild enthusiasm.”<sup>37</sup> Whitfield viewed the Bible as a means of grace that could only be interpreted through the help of the Holy Spirit.

An original American religion, the Shakers drew much of their influence from the Quakers whose theology and practice ran similar to the Puritans with one notable exception: Quakers had a much higher view of humanity than did the Calvinists.<sup>38</sup> The Quaker’s favorable anthropology resulted in both an inner spirituality aimed at personal holiness but also one that flowed outward, manifested through acts of peace and social justice. The Shakers in America came out of the Quaker tradition and placed an emphasis upon worship that included “ecstatic dancing” and “mystical union in Christ.”<sup>39</sup> This religious tradition had a part in shaping evangelical spirituality, particularly the Pentecostal movement of the early 1900s and then later charismatic movements of the latter half of the twentieth century. The Azusa Street revival underscored the baptism of the Holy Spirit who showered followers with gifts

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<sup>36</sup> Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>38</sup> Sheldrake, *Brief History*, 121.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-51.

of speaking in tongues, of prophecy, of interpretation, and of healing.<sup>40</sup>

Though Pentecostalism can be thought of as a denomination (Assemblies of God in particular), the charismatic movements that emerged out of the 1960s made their mark more as movements and less a denomination, having influence in a range of religious traditions. The two are similar however in that they give prominence to outward manifestations of the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, corporate worship is the primary setting for such expressions.<sup>41</sup>

Given the diversity of religious influences in evangelicalism, it appears difficult to capture the essence of its spirituality. Acknowledging this complexity, scholars contend that enough commonalities exist to depict an evangelical spirituality. David W. Bebbington argues for four characteristics that are the crux of evangelicalism: (1) *conversionism*, (2) *activism*, (3) *biblicism*, and (4) *crucicentrism*.<sup>42</sup> Conversionism is the simple belief that lives need changing. This change is the result of knowing both one's inability to change under one's own power coupled with Christ's ability and willingness to do so for incapable individuals. Conversionism furthermore, is not mere intellectual ascent or confessional practice, but a move towards integration of

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<sup>40</sup> Edith Blumhofer, "Azusa Street Revival," *Christian Century*, March 7, 2006, 20-22.

<sup>41</sup> Oliver McMahan, "A Living Stream: Spiritual Direction within the Pentecostal/Charismatic Tradition," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 30, no. 4 (2002): 336-45.

<sup>42</sup> David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Winchester, MA: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 2-17.

faith into a person's whole being.<sup>43</sup> Activism broadly speaking is best understood as dynamism, the ability to move and create than lay dormant. Specifically, activism holds the idea that if one's life is converted as a result of one's justification in the work of Christ, then that person's life should convert others towards a similar life change. Biblicism views the Bible as the main source of truth and inspiration, akin to John Wesley's dictum of "being a man of one book." Moreover it views God's self-revelation and God's dealings with humanity as expressed in Holy Scripture. On account of this conviction, evangelicalism commits to Bible-centered theology and spirituality. Crucicentrism holds the atoning work of God in the crucified Christ as a final core tenet of evangelical faith. The cross not only bespeaks of humanity's frailty, but also to the rich generosity and willing submission of God on behalf of creation.

David Dockery takes a slightly different approach as he locates the keys to an evangelical spirituality in the writings of Paul and the apostle's emphasis upon the workings of the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> There are two main spheres through which the Holy Spirit works: the individual believer and the community of believers. Paul's approach to the spiritual life is marked by the work of the

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<sup>43</sup> Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 124-25.

<sup>44</sup> David S. Dockery, "An Outline of Paul's View of the Spiritual Life: Foundation for an Evangelical Spirituality," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 340-46.

Holy Spirit to initiate those into that life and sustain it through sanctification. While this process is powered by the Holy Spirit, it does not give the individual or the community a libertine license to act as one pleases with little regard for oneself and others. Rather, the Holy Spirit guides the believer to be freed from sin and to grow in unity with others, carrying the responsibility to live Christianly.

From these foci, an evangelical spirituality begins to emerge. Ian Randall's suggestion to include worship as an addendum to Bebbington's typology helps here.<sup>45</sup> Randall argues that worship, both individual and corporate but more so the latter, places Bebbington's four tenets in appropriate context. It is in light of the worship of God that the four find ultimate purpose. One might argue that this stress upon worship is a spiritual reason a rapid explosion of the contemporary praise and worship movement occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century. Darryl Hart identifies how various Christian music companies have played a significant role in shaping evangelical spirituality, worship, and theology with an emphasis upon personal and intimate language and a music genre akin to Western rock.<sup>46</sup> There are those however that caution against the shallow exterior and overt

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<sup>45</sup> Ian M. Randall, "Recovering Evangelical Spirituality," *European Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (2010): 40-41.

<sup>46</sup> Darryl G. Hart, *That Old-Time Religion in Modern America: Evangelical Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 172-200.



emotionalism this movement presents.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, one might say that a mature relationship with God, regardless the emotion, *is* the ultimate form of worship.

If worship in the broad sense (i.e., mature relationship) is the chief end of humanity, it takes several forms in evangelical spirituality. First, hymnody, as brought to the Wesleys by the Moravians and then later developed by the two brothers, is one such form.<sup>48</sup> Individual and corporate singing reminds singers and hearers of the works of God while also opening themselves to the fresh work of the Holy Spirit. Second, if evangelicalism is to be Bible-centered, active, and focused on life change, then daily devotional reading and prayer are of prime importance for they are disciplines that provide opportunities for inspiration.<sup>49</sup> Alister McGrath cautions however that keeping the disciplines should be not confused with a maturing relationship with God.<sup>50</sup> A reversal of these two often leads to rote action and eventual spiritual death. Lastly, from the Evangelical Revivals, the preaching and the hearing of the word of God as

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<sup>47</sup> There is concern that while the new contemporary praise songs are strong in intimate language and what the worshiper does *for* God (e.g., "I love you," "I'll serve you"), they lack substantive theology and proclamations of the works of God. See Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>48</sup> By 'hymnody' I am not suggesting the singing of *hymns* but rather singing of songs in worship. Contemporary praise songs are hymnody in this broad sense.

<sup>49</sup> Ian M. Randall, "Evangelical Spirituality," in *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 289-91.

<sup>50</sup> McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 129.

it is steeped in the cross, is a twofold practice. First, the preaching of the Good News is a challenge commonly taken up as a response to the Romans 10:14 passage that asks how people will believe if they have not heard and how will they have heard if there is no one to preach? Therefore preaching becomes a form of spiritual discipline as it bears the word of God to those that desperately need to hear it. Second, the practice of listening is one that is marked by making oneself available to God through devotional reading, prayers, and hearing the word through preaching.

One might offer then that an evangelical spirituality is concerned ultimately with a maturing relationship with God as revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the Holy Spirit's renewing work in the individual and community of believers. Evangelical spirituality strives for a transformation of inner character resulting in a difference of outward action, from personal piety and devotion to God, to social compassion and grace.

### *Korean American Spirituality*

Asian American scholars have identified the effects American evangelicalism has had on second-generation Korean American spirituality.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*; Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*; Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*; Karen J. Chai, "Beyond 'Strictness' to Distinctiveness: Generational Transition in Korean Protestant Churches," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 157-79.

One area this has significance is with identity formation. Identity in evangelical spirituality is more theological in nature than ethnic or racial, and strives more for a "unity in Christ" than a highlighting of difference. Thus it seems that Korean American evangelicals are drawn to construct their identity in apparently mutually exclusive ways.<sup>52</sup> Identity construction takes on an "I am a Christian first...Korean American second" form but not necessarily both simultaneously.<sup>53</sup> This falls in line with American evangelicalism's stress on a transformation of inner character resulting in an identity founded in Christ.

Korean American churches in Sharon Kim's and Victoria Hyonchu Kwon's study however contest the notion that for Korean American Christians, identity is exclusive of ethnicity or race.<sup>54</sup> Both similarly argue that because assimilation is not a straight-line endeavor for Asian immigrants as it was for Whites, ethnic churches offer spaces that resist racial scripting and marginalization. However for Kim, the ethnicity that is engendered does not reflect a pure pluralist model either. Many second-generation Korean American churches combine some of the cultural and ethnic practices of their

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<sup>52</sup> Rudy V. Busto, "The Gospel According to the Model Minority?: Hazardous Interpretation of Asian American Evangelical College Students," *Amerasia Journal* 22, no. 1 (1996): 138; Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 71-96.

<sup>53</sup> Soyoung Park, "Intersection of Religion," 196.

<sup>54</sup> Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 4-15; Victoria Hyonchu Kwon, "Houston Korean Ethnic Church: An Ethnic Enclave," in *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*, ed. Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000): 109-23.

parents' generation with aspects of Western American culture in their identity formation. Yet to label the second generation as bicultural is not sufficient according to Kim for in having the ability to maneuver in two cultures, they create hybrid third identities that are not fully one and/or the other, but a mixture of the two. On account of their practices of meeting together as a second-generation Korean American church, Kim contends that their Christian identity is not mutually exclusive of their ethnicity.

My observations at Christ Church seem to confirm Kim's hypothesis of hybridity. Though the overwhelming majority of attendees and each staff member are either second- or one point five-generation Korean American, there were many aspects of church life that pointed to an emerging reality from among the Korean philosophies, values, and practices of the first generation and the Western, North American ones from the surrounding culture in which these Korean Americans have largely grown. For instance, I noticed that while they held—similar to the first generation—full fellowship meals following the services, the food choices were not limited to Korean items. The food items were rarely Korean and when they were, they were catered from Korean stores. Moreover, many members of Christ Church would venture over to the first-generation side regularly and take Korean food from their fellowship while the first-generation members' children would frequently come to Christ Church's fellowship to eat pizza, Mediterranean food, hot dogs, and other non-Korean foods. Conversation and preaching language was mostly English,

though one could hear Korean spoken between members on occasion. If the pastor used a Korean term or some cultural understanding, he would be quick to explain in English what that meant for the non-Korean-speaking attendees. The children's ministry in regards to language was a little different on account of the children coming from both dominant Korean-speaking and English-speaking families. The bilingual pastors and teachers spoke to the children in both languages, mainly using English to teach that day's content and Korean to teach behavior (e.g., "put your hands together for prayer").

In my interviews, I found that while many of the men dealt with identity issues, they did not explicitly communicate that their search for identity is largely predicated upon race or ethnicity. Several pointed out that coming to a *Korean American* church was due to feeling more comfortable, having friends that were Korean who also attended the church, or referred to the uncomplicated reality of having others understand one's culture and not needing to explain it. Brian was an exception. He did offer that though he really enjoyed and admired the ministries of a "multiracial" church close to his work—"I felt like they did so much of a better job than most Korean churches"—he shared that it would be a difficult transition to attend that church because he didn't want to be a "token Asian" and seen as "Panda Express."<sup>55</sup> For Brian, race serves as a point of reflection in his spirituality and identity formation and a significant reason why he continues to attend a Korean

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<sup>55</sup> Interview #6

American church. On the other end of the spectrum, Eric came to Christ Church because he felt called to it. Having previously come from a multiracial church, race was a non-issue for him and perhaps an early detriment. He admits however that race is slowly becoming a factor as he moves along in his identity formation:

Certainly the Korean American nature of this church is something that I think about and wrestle with here and there. I think in a way it's restorative because as much as my father had racism against other races, probably the most poignant racially-based sentiment that I noticed in him was self-loathing of his Korean identity.<sup>56</sup>

Though the majority of the rest of the men did not explicitly raise the significance of race at Christ Church, several men shared that in their late high school and college years, they began to befriend other Korean Americans, which led them to a larger network of Korean friendships and eventual attendance in Korean American churches. Since a number of men moved from Koreatown to predominantly white suburbs, their friendships were largely non-Korean until their later years in high school or when they went off to college. What I find interesting is that for the men in their twenties who did not see race as a considerable limiting social factor, as many evidenced by pointing out their multiracial circle of childhood friends, they too attended Korean American churches such as Christ Church, long after their high school years. Therefore I contend that regardless of their explicit reasoning of race and identity, it is a noteworthy part of these men's lives.

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<sup>56</sup> Interview #1

A second way Korean American spirituality reflects American evangelical spirituality is through corporate worship. Entering into second-generation Korean American churches, one quickly notices the use of contemporary praise songs, overhead projectors, full bands, and other technological equipment. This was no different at Christ Church as I observed a full band most every week with up to four guitarists on occasional weeks. As several scholars note, the atmosphere contains a range of styles from a rock concert to earlier forms of praise and worship such as Maranatha, Vineyard, and Hosanna Integrity (1980s and 1990s) to more current movements such as Hillsong and Worship Together.<sup>57</sup> The majority of the songs I noted Christ Church singing came from these major worship companies in addition to other Christian contemporary music artists; hymns were played sporadically.

Remove the aspect of race from these churches and it becomes nearly impossible to distinguish between Korean American contemporary praise and worship and the Western worship industry from which they mimic their music. One might say that the only aspect that *is* Korean American in Korean American worship is the performance of such music *by* Korean Americans. A second-generation Korean American woman who attended the Urbana 2005

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<sup>57</sup> Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*, 50; Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 49-50; Karen J. Chai, "Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church," in *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, ed. R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 306; Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 86-87.

conference shared with me an incident that occurred in worship. Aiming to exhibit the cultural diversity represented at Urbana, the worship band with a Black American leader played songs one night with an urban groove to represent African American worship. The next night a person of Hispanic descent led songs played with a Latin beat while singing in Spanish to represent Hispanic worship. When the night came to present Asian American worship, an Asian (Chinese) American man led worship on his guitar with the band singing contemporary praise songs in a rock-grunge rhythmic beat reminiscent of current Hillsong and Worship Together melodies.<sup>58</sup> Apparently, what made the worship Asian American was that it was led by an Asian American.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Perhaps Mia Tuan's phrase "honorary white" is an appropriate designation here. See Tuan, *Forever Foreigners*.

<sup>59</sup> This example raises in part, the dilemma of racial construction, essentialism, and agency. That is, since the term, 'Asian American' is a social construct with political ramifications (Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 1994) is it even possible to discern what Asian American worship would look like given the vast experiences and realities of Asians in America? Furthermore, does having a Black African, Hispanic, and Asian American worship border on essentialism? Finally, this example raises the issue of agency asking who determines the make-up of Asian American worship. Does it suffice to say that Asian American worship is worship done by Asian Americans regardless the form and content? A similar debate among current Asian American religious scholars asks whether or not an Asian American Christianity can be spoken of? Is there Asian American theology and biblical hermeneutics and if so, what is it? See Tat-Siong Benny Liew, *What is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics?: Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press; Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2008); Jeffrey K. Jue, "Asian American Theology: A Modern and Postmodern Dilemma," in *Conversations: Asian American Evangelical Theologies in Formation*, ed. D.J. Chuang and Timothy Tseng (Washington D.C.: L<sup>2</sup> Foundation, 2006), 99-119;



A third characteristic of the current evangelical praise and worship culture noticeable in Korean American spirituality is an emphasis upon bodily expression. This includes the raising of hands, closing of eyes, clapping, shouting, dancing, and kneeling. This can be traced in North America to the rise of Pentecostalism and the charismatic “Latter Reign” and third wave movements of the first and last halves of the twentieth century respectively.<sup>60</sup> As mentioned above, it also find its roots in the English Revivals that turned towards a more heartfelt and emotional expression of religion.

As I attended various worship services (i.e., Sunday morning worship, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week early morning worship, joint Easter morning worship with other Korean American churches) at Christ Church, I observed many of these existing forms. Though the worship leader would often encourage people to raise their hands or focus upon being in the “presence of God alone,” several members did so regardless. The congregation clapped loudly and in unison to most of the upbeat songs, singing vociferously and energetically. At the end of some songs, I could even hear whistling like one might hear after a spectacular play at a sporting event. Times of spontaneous and corporate prayer were also a part of the free-flowing and organic dynamic the worship leaders seem to want. Moreover, when I attended the early

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Mary F. Foskett and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan, eds., *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006).

<sup>60</sup> Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

morning prayer meetings during Holy Week, one aspect that appears to have carried over from the first generation is the out-loud, unison prayer for which Koreans are well-known. Brian points out however that he wishes the second generation would be as fervent in their prayers as the first generation. “One thing I respect about my parents’ generation is the morning prayer and how they just pray fervently for the church....I feel like it’s been forgotten.”<sup>61</sup>

Several men shared in their interviews that they had experienced charismatic spirituality in worship services and particularly church retreats when they were younger. Most of these men looked favorably on these experiences though there were a few that qualified them with a bit of skepticism. Chris’ hard and drug-filled lifestyle in high school for instance, changed on account of a charismatic retreat his parents required him to attend. He recounted how the speaker, who “was amazing” eventually had a time of prayer for people where “people were falling backward.” Chris shares that when the pastor prayed for him, he blacked out and fell backwards. People told him later that he was screaming though he doesn’t remember any of it.<sup>62</sup> While Chris is grateful for how this experience changed his life, he is also a bit cautious when churches get too charismatic in worship, particularly with the public display of speaking in tongues. He reasons that if the Holy Spirit gives the gift of tongues (he believes in all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit)

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<sup>61</sup> Interview #6

<sup>62</sup> Interview #11

for the edification of the whole body and for the glory of God, then an interpreter needs to be present in public worship to make the prayers known. Chris is quick to add that he doesn't "see that happening at church" as most simply pray without interpretation. There is further reason for Chris' skepticism and that is on account of the spiritually, charismatic, youth pastor he had in high school. The pastor was leaving his position on staff at the church to go to another church but before he left, he told a group of core student leaders to go with him invoking the name of God in the process ("God told me that we would do ministry together") to persuade many to join. Chris and his best friend would be turned off by the ensuing division in this church and eventually left the Church altogether for a few years; his friend never recovered and rarely steps into a church.<sup>63</sup>

Ken offers that he grew up also with very charismatic experiences having witnessed several exorcisms. He shares that he desires the gift of tongues and even has had "so many pastors" who have said to him, "Hey, I have a hundred percent batting average. Let me pray for you," only to be discouraged when nothing happened.<sup>64</sup> He feels pressure to have it reasoning that because it is a gift and everyone else is receiving it, why is he not also partaking in it? He confides that it is difficult sometimes not to hold to a tit-for-

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<sup>63</sup> Interview #11

<sup>64</sup> Interview #4

tat theology as he believes that his lack of speaking in tongues is some kind of divine punishment for his struggle with pornography.

It would be a stretch to characterize Christ Church's collective spirituality solely through a charismatic lens. It does not practice the speaking in tongues or other charismatic gifts collectively, though there are individuals who I've heard uttering prayers throughout the worship services. One could perhaps say that the denominational affiliation of the church and the theological background of the senior pastor tend to aim for a balanced approach for Christ Church's spiritual expressions.

A fourth aspect that parallels American evangelicalism is an emphasis upon right doctrine that arises largely out of Bible centeredness. For many second-generation Korean American Christians, being "biblical"—a phrase I often heard in my ethnographic observations and several of the interviews—includes a form of biblical literalism that results in right action (e.g., the "What Would Jesus Do?" phenomenon).<sup>65</sup> One might say that a desire to better understand the Bible leads one to commit to practices of corporate Bible study and personal devotion including the reading of scripture and prayer. Peter shared that a spiritually mature person is somebody "who is in the Word and you know when they speak, it's backed up with the Word."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, practicing personal devotion, Bible reading, and prayer on a regular basis

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<sup>65</sup> Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 54-57.

<sup>66</sup> Interview #9

should lead to improved moral action. Jimmy explains that “self morals” is how he defines spirituality as he learns to discern what is right from wrong.<sup>67</sup>

Korean American spirituality also includes the act of preaching and listening. The congregation’s ability to know the Bible and God’s intentions for them lies both in the pastor’s responsibility to teach and preach biblically and the hearer’s response to listen and obey that message. John sums up well the sentiment of others, offering that the word “obedience” comes to mind when he thinks of Christian spirituality.<sup>68</sup>

A fifth feature is the need to be ‘born again’ and to accept Christ as personal savior.<sup>69</sup> Evangelicalism’s stress of the cross and the atoning work of Christ is the impetus of this characteristic. For some evangelicals, being born again is confession and acceptance of God’s atoning work (justification). A couple of men in their interviews for instance, identified a concern about their fathers’ salvation noting that they were unsure where their fathers stood in terms of faith matters. For others, being born again is an issue of inner personal transformation and the work that happens after confession and justification (sanctification). Being born again for many Korean Americans, is the process that occurs in one’s pursuit of personal holiness (piety) and

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<sup>67</sup> Interview #10

<sup>68</sup> Interview #3

<sup>69</sup> Chai, “Competing,” 309; Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 57-59.

religious authenticity of one's personal relationship with God.<sup>70</sup> When I asked the men to share how they view spirituality, most pointed to personal and character transformation towards Christ-likeness. Spirituality has to do with integrating one's inner life with their outward actions, bringing consistency to the two in all aspects of their lives. Jesus for many was the prime exemplar of this.

Finally a sixth quality of Korean American spirituality that reflects evangelical spirituality is its activism or outreach, traditionally known as evangelism. As a religion committed to the transforming work of God, it also believes that it should share this news through proselytization (evangelism) and other practices such as acts of compassion, social justice, and prayer for those that have not accepted Christ as savior. During my participant observations at Christ Church, one of the months was dedicated solely to the local and global outreach ministries. In each of the worship services, time was given to pray corporately for a specific "unreached" people group. Overhead slides were made from week to week that gave demographic data concerning each group. Two leaders came up to present the material and then led the congregation in prayer for each group, particularly focusing upon their salvation. One of the men I interviewed started a Bible group at his work though he admitted that there were explicit guidelines against creating such a

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<sup>70</sup> Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*, 46-48.

group and that he and his boss (who supported him) could suffer backlash from other employees.

Several of the men spoke about spirituality however not in terms of evangelism, but outreach and community. For them, living out one's Christian faith was a matter of living it with others in community. Moreover, it is about being outward oriented instead of self-oriented. That is, Christian spirituality is a matter of living in service to others and not only for the development of one's personal relationship with God. Interestingly, with the exception of a few years following the Los Angeles city upheaval in 1992 when churches were some of the most heavily-involved institutions in community relations, second-generation Korean American churches generally have not extended this activist and outward-reaching spirit into the political and civic arenas as one might expect given the surge of involvement of evangelicals in U.S. politics during the late twentieth century.<sup>71</sup>

### *Shamanistic Influences*

Though it appears that aspects of Korean American spirituality find their beginnings in American evangelicalism, it would be remiss to think that it does not have roots in Korean spirituality. For instance, corporate prayer in loud unison (*tongsung kido*) may find its lineage in the English Revivals,

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<sup>71</sup> Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*.

Pentecostalism, and the charismatic movements,<sup>72</sup> but some scholars contend that these expressions of Christian worship are more readily accepted by Koreans because of the influence Korean folk religions (particularly shamanism) have on their worldviews and practices.<sup>73</sup>

Shamanism stresses harmony in interpersonal relations and a kinship with one's ancestors. Evil is introduced by those who act out of selfish ambition at the expense of the group; thus shamanism instills an ethos of conformity.<sup>74</sup> An individual isolated from others therefore is considered a pitiful person thus making ostracism an effective punishment. A show of unselfish emotion is also welcomed as it signifies a "strong humanity" and helps to control society on account of the potential negative emotion directed toward the one who causes pain for others.<sup>75</sup> Emotion is a governor that deters selfish displays of emotion, for the one who exhibits self-interested emotion is now subject to the negative emotional response of others which augments isolation. Shamanism also adheres to the belief that an authoritative and

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<sup>72</sup> Myung Soo Park, "David Yonggi Cho and International Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 12, no. 1 (2003): 107-28.

<sup>73</sup> Don Baker, *Korean Spirituality* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008); Chu-Kun Chang, "An Introduction to Korean Shamanism," in *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*, ed. Richard W. L. Guisso and Chai-Shin Yu (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 30-51; Pyong-Choon Hahm, "Shamanism and the Korean World-View, Family Life-Cycle, Society and Social Life," in *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*, ed. Richard W. L. Guisso and Chai-Shin Yu (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1998): 60-97.

<sup>74</sup> Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 8-9.

<sup>75</sup> Hahm, "Shamanism," 65-69.



charismatic figure who keeps the collective in mind stabilizes chaos.<sup>76</sup> Those who visit shamans therefore go expecting charismatic demonstrations of emotion through vivid song, dance, and loud shouts.<sup>77</sup>

Parallels with Shamanism expedited Protestant Christianity's acceptance and influence in Korea. Don Baker notes several reasons why this expediency occurred.<sup>78</sup> First, Protestant missionaries used daily vernacular to relate their message, unlike the Catholics who used Latin and the Confucians who used classical Chinese. Second, the worship of Protestants was highly participatory as attendees sung mightily hymns in corporate worship. Whereas visitations to shamans ended in performance viewing, Protestant worship services actively involved people. Third, the familial language (e.g., "child of God" "Father") ensconced in Protestant Christianity rang of collectivism and concerns for the family. Fourth, the worship of revivals organized by the Protestants simulated best the emotional fervor of shamanistic rituals. Finally, Koreans ironically received a gospel message aimed at dealing with *individual* sin because it philosophically addressed the problem of human failing in a way that had not been made to that point. Protestants did not leave Koreans to ponder their shortcomings as in a Shamanistic worldview. Rather Protestants presented a doctrine of sin with a message of atonement and culminated this

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<sup>76</sup> Hahm, "Shamanism," 87.

<sup>77</sup> Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 22.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-74.

conversion with exuberant worship and passages of scripture that assured them of the change that could be had within new believers.<sup>79</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Korean Christians influenced by three aspects: (1) a Shamanistic worldview, (2) high emotionalism, and (3) the firmness of biblical orthodoxy, continue to be readily drawn to the ecstatic and biblically-based forms of evangelical spirituality. Given the chaotic reality of many Korean Americans due to immigration stress on the family, racial and ethnic discrimination, and other anxieties, a system such as evangelicalism with its concrete spirituality is attractive. This parallels Pentecostalism's nascence among the racially poor and its continued pull among oppressed people groups particularly from the global south. While the charismatic movements of the 1960s and 1970s appealed to racial and class constituents different from early Pentecostalism, these movements appealed in part, to those who came out of hippie and drug cultures looking for stability.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Korean American and Evangelical Spirituality: How Alike Are They?*

Sharon Kim's recent study contests the idea that Korean American spirituality, particularly its forms of corporate worship, is monolithic.<sup>81</sup> Not all churches desire polished bands or strive for high emotionalism in worship. Moreover, one might contend that while Korean American spirituality is largely

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<sup>79</sup> Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 73-74.

<sup>80</sup> Redman, *Great Worship*; Hart, *Old-Time Religion*.

<sup>81</sup> Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 86-89.

the byproduct of American evangelicalism, they are dissimilar in several ways due to the influences of Korean culture. Soong-Chan Rah challenges the Western evangelical church (particularly the white church) to look to non-Western churches, such as the Korean American congregation, to free itself from the individualistic, materialistic, and racist ideologies and practices it engenders.<sup>82</sup> Collectivity and hospitality are two significant elements that differentiate Korean American spirituality from its evangelical counterpart. A collective mindset brings people to consider others in decision-making processes and encourages persons to keep harmony in interpersonal relations. It moves persons away from a self-centered approach to religion and faith towards a consideration of others. Therefore, Rah criticizes contemporary praise and worship that contains an abundance of “I” language and an emphasis upon *personal* salvation to the detriment of the collective. Collectivity calls for attentiveness to systems and structures in addition to the awareness of others. Furthermore, hospitality and generosity run counter to the materialism and self-satiation apparent in American evangelicalism as churches build many of their churches upon business principles and capitalist ideals.

While I see the value of Rah’s challenge of Western evangelicalism to look to the modeling of Korean American spirituality and practice, I argue that

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<sup>82</sup> Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Books, 2009).

second-generation Korean American spirituality has mimicked so much of American evangelicalism—particularly in worship—that Rah’s summons to change is as appropriate for second-generation Korean American evangelicals as it is for (white) Western evangelicals. If worship songs are shaping of one’s theology and spiritual habits, the songs chosen by Korean American worship leaders and pastors are no different than the ones that help to shape the churches Rah critiques. Korean American theological and doctrinal foci and worship practices compare similarly to American evangelicalism.

### *Gender in American Evangelicalism*

It appears that with issues of gender, Korean American theology and spirituality are similar to American evangelicalism, conservative Protestantism, and in some instances, to fundamentalism. John Bartkowski historically traces and organizes American evangelicalism’s stance on gender into four distinct periods: pre-American Revolution, from Revolution to the late 1800s, from 1875 to 1930, and from 1930 to the present.<sup>83</sup> On account of the New England Baptists’ influence upon the development of American evangelicalism, Bartkowski maintains that strains of egalitarianism could be found among Evangelicals of that period. The Baptists’ stress upon individual religion and the roles women played in sustaining the revivals were two factors that

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<sup>83</sup> John P. Bartkowski, *Remaking the Godly Marriage: Gender Negotiation in Evangelical Families* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 17-34.

produced this inclination. An emphasis upon individual and heartfelt religion provided women the opportunity to become involved in preaching and organizational governance at revivals and church meetings. This weakened any centralized Puritan and Anglican authority that underscored the sovereignty of God over-against self-will. Furthermore, the role of women during this period began to overturn Puritan views based upon distinct sex roles.

During the American Revolution however, the Baptists altered their views of the sexes on account of having to rethink their outward-facing approach to non-believers amidst a growing religious market. Whereas the previous approach was to focus upon “winning individual souls,” the Baptists now began to make the family, to the detriment of women, the center of church leadership.<sup>84</sup> This ideological shift is what one scholar views as the phenomenon of “familism”—the idea that the man is to lead the family.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, evangelical ideals that began to converge with Victorian principles specifically about the headship of the father in the family home further weakened egalitarianism.

However the development of corporate industrialism from the late 1800s to the early 1900s began to pull men—and their influence upon the

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<sup>84</sup> Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 20.

<sup>85</sup> William Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 8-9.

family—away from the home and into the public sphere. This shift came in conjunction with the first wave of feminism and a move of women to be less dependent upon men. The growth of fundamentalism was therefore the conservative evangelical response to the decline of the Victorian father and a reinforcement of gender roles based upon a combination of biological sex and biblical inerrancy. The idea that the Bible contains universal, self-evident truths regardless of the particular context and irrespective of hermeneutical complexities, allowed fundamentalists to take passages (e.g., a wife's submission to her husband, the disallowance of women to teach a man) to reinforce men's and women's roles. One first-wave fundamentalist captures well the critique of women who began to take up larger social roles:

In man, the Scriptures emphasize the active virtues....In women, they emphasize the passive virtues....When this difference is lost and man becomes womanish, or woman becomes mannish, then the proper balance is lost, and harmony gives way to discord.<sup>86</sup>

Mark Muesse's essay on religious machismo correspondingly argues that on account of three factors (the first wave of the women's movement, the unyielding ethos of fundamentalism, and an understanding of masculinity defined by the secular) fundamentalists espoused a hypermasculine theology in order to disprove any masculine deficiencies they either feared within themselves or anticipated would be cast on them by secular society.<sup>87</sup> The

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<sup>86</sup> Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 28.

<sup>87</sup> Mark W. Muesse, "Religious Machismo: Masculinity and Fundamentalism," in *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities*, ed. Stephen

result ironically was to present a theological construct that rivaled secular visions of masculinity—a theology based upon reason, little or no emotion, highly controlled and unquestionably ordered.

Following World War II and particularly after the progressive movements of the 1960s and 1970s, conservative Protestants, including many Evangelicals, continued the discourse on gender differentiation. A shift however occurred with this latest movement for as earlier fundamentalists relied on selected Biblical passages to defend a wife's submission and inherent womanly traits, later conservatives and fundamentalists drew from an argument based largely upon chronology.<sup>88</sup> Since Adam was created before Eve and since Eve drew Adam to sin, a woman's role is to be second to that of the man. Later conservatives however would make the distinction that this does not suggest any inequality, but rather a demarcation of the spheres of domain. Furthermore, the logic was buttressed by a view of essentialism—that males and females hold specific characteristics due to their biological sex.

Though research has shown this characterization of gender by Evangelicals as generally accurate, there are those who argue that there has existed and continues to exist alternative evangelical voices who contest these

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B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark W. Muesse (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 89-102.

<sup>88</sup> Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 32.

views.<sup>89</sup> While this is a minority view within Evangelicalism, it would be remiss to typify the discourse on gender and Evangelicals in the manner depicted above without noting a few of the nuances.

First, as Bradley Wilcox finds in his research, many contemporary conservative Protestants (including Evangelicals) are more apt to spend time with their families and be invested in their children than are their mainline Protestant counterparts. He reasons that this is due to the upsurge of literature and rhetoric that has come from elite conservative Protestants (e.g., James Dobson, Tim and Beverly LaHaye) who push for a new kind of male leadership—that of servant leadership.<sup>90</sup> Here, the father/male is challenged to take up his God-ordained position to lead, but to do so in a servant-style approach as Jesus did. As a result, more conservative Protestant fathers invest in the family on account of their answering the call to lead. At the same time that an increase of the father's involvement in their children is noteworthy, Wilcox also comments that there is much less involvement in the division of household labor for evangelical men than in their mainline Protestant counterparts, giving credence to the thought that evangelical theology drives the roles and practices of men and women.

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<sup>89</sup> Elaine Storkey, "Evangelical Theology and Gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs*; Bartkowski, *Remaking*.

<sup>90</sup> Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs*.



A second nuance on gender discourse among Evangelicals is that there are some who are less inclined to adhere to a *radical essentialism* concerning men's and women's sex and gender differences. While radical essentialists hold to immutable sex differences, *moderate essentialists* contend that men and women, though having certain innate attributes, can incorporate characteristics of the other sex.<sup>91</sup> It takes hard work and much patience, but a man for instance, can learn to be sensitive.

Finally, there are those who do not take a gender difference approach, but rather view gender equally in the sense that both men and women have the capacity to take on a spectrum of characteristics, including strength, passivity, sensitivity, aggression, leadership, and followership. Scripture is to be read holistically and thematically and not selectively. The main "goal" of being is not gendered in a traditional sense, but the result of taking on the fruit of the Spirit as found in the letter to the Galatians.

### *Gender in Korean American Spirituality*

Gender as it is experienced in Korean American churches and their spirituality is a subject that has been taken up by only a few (read: Asian American women).<sup>92</sup> Moreover, while there have been a handful of works on

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<sup>91</sup> Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 46-48.

<sup>92</sup> While most works on Korean American religion and spirituality have studied a number of issues, I have found gender to often be a corollary subject matter with the exception of a few works, notably Jung Ha Kim's qualitative study of Korean American women. See Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers*; Rita

gender by Korean American women, there remains a noticeable lacuna of the subject by Korean American men (and Asian American men) and Korean American Evangelicals. Antony Alumkal's study on gender in a Korean American church, Andrew Sung Park's reflections on the *Han* women bear because of sexism, Young Lee Hertig and Chloe Sun's edited volume of Asian American evangelical women's reframing of various Biblical characters, and Soyoung Park's study of identity formation among Korean American evangelical women are the rare exceptions.<sup>93</sup>

When gender is addressed in Korean American religious works, particularly in the field of sociology, it offers a glimpse into the gender ideologies of Korean Americans. These views are usually based upon two notable factors: traditional gender views within the conservative wing of American Christianity (i.e., American evangelicalism, conservative Protestantism, and fundamentalism) and Korean Confucianism. Confucianism emphasizes the hierarchical ordering of five relationships including father-son,

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Nakashima Brock, et al., eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *The Grace of Sophia: A Korean North American Women's Christology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002); Soyoung Park, "Intersection of Religion."

<sup>93</sup> Alumkal, "Preserving Patriarchy,"; Park, *Wounded Heart*; Young Lee Hertig and Chloe Sun, eds., *Mirrored Reflections: Reframing Biblical Characters* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010); Soyoung Park, "Intersection of Religion."

husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, old-young, and ruler-ruled.<sup>94</sup> As people and society configure their interpersonal relations in hierarchical ordering, harmony ensues and society functions more fittingly.

Though second-generation Korean Americans appear to be assimilated and acculturated to Western values including egalitarianism, research shows this may not be the case. Alumkal argues that it is on account of evangelical theology that second-generation Korean Americans continue to hold to traditional gender roles reasoning, as noted above, that keeping strict gender roles is biblical.<sup>95</sup> In her study of Korean Christian fellowships on college campuses in the northeastern United States, Park finds that although Korean American women enjoy a measure of equality in organizational leadership (Park reasons it's because the ministries are student-run), it is not a full equality as the preachers, guest speakers, and worship leaders during her research were all males, even while there was a female staff worker present at one of the campus ministries.<sup>96</sup> In an informal conversation with two males, as Park adjusted the males' use of the term "King" to "Queen" as a descriptor for the gender of God, the men retorted, "Don't even go there" as a way to squelch any heretical viewpoints.<sup>97</sup> These practices were also found in Rebecca Kim's study of various campus ministries at a large West Coast

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<sup>94</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 35-37.

<sup>95</sup> Alumkal, "Preserving Patriarchy."

<sup>96</sup> Soyoung Park, "Intersection of Religion," 202-05.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

university. Though there were female speakers in each of the other campus ministry groups, only in the Korean American campus ministries were female speakers absent.<sup>98</sup> Kim speculates that this phenomenon might be due to the fact that the Korean American campus ministries are student run and have no paid staff (who are women) to give the messages. Additionally, as they turn to local church pastors to come in and give the message, there are relatively little evangelically-trained women pastors who could give the message. While this might be true, I conjecture that there aren't as many evangelically-trained women because of the theological interpretations and commitments that prevent them from entering theological education for the purposes of ordination and training in spiritual leadership.

While I did not ask questions specifically in the interviews about evangelical identity formation, it became clear that the Bible was a central force in shaping who these men are becoming, particularly in their understanding of masculinity and manhood. When I asked the men how they thought their roles play out in their (potential) families and marriages, several of the men pointed to the belief that the man should be the head of the household. As I pressed further how this looks like as it manifests in the home, the most common answer was spiritual headship, which has to do with making sure that the family is on a good and healthy spiritual path. The exchange

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<sup>98</sup> Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*, 63-64.

between Isaiah and me illustrates this as we turned to marriage in our conversation.

Mark: What would you want [your marriage] to look like in terms of how you and your spouse interact, function, and [carry out] your roles?

Isaiah: I'm actually more worried about the spiritual roles of the household [than the other roles] because I know from the Bible that I should be the spiritual head of the household, the immediate household right?...I'm more worried about being a spiritual leader in my household.

Mark: What does spiritual leadership look like to you?

Isaiah: For me it's more setting an example in terms of just like, not just attending church but even through prayer and even through seeking....

Mark: And that responsibility for spiritual leadership in your marriage is largely upon you [and] not necessarily your wife or both?

Isaiah: No I think it's a shared responsibility. You know in the Bible when it says that the man is supposed to be the spiritual head of the household, I don't think of it as a ninety-ten split or a hundred-zero split. When I think of it, I think of it as a sixty-forty split. You know, like maybe you have the edge because you're given that crux of that responsibility. So you're given a little bit more because ultimately that's what God wanted your role to be for your household.<sup>99</sup>

What I found interesting in Isaiah's response is that while he believes men and women should partner in their spiritual responsibilities within the family, there was still a God-ordained position of higher responsibility. This was a common theme for those who believed in male headship. After sharing this idea a few times in the first half of his interview, I asked Abe to say more about it.

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<sup>99</sup> Interview #7

Mark: Can you say more about what [male headship looks] like for you in terms of a man being the head of the household?

Abe: You're the head of the household but you kind of...you're the head because your wife kind of lets you be the head as well as you allowing her to be part of the head. You know because she helps run the family. She may be in rank, where everyone is looking at you, she's right below you. You know but you guys are co-....You guys are partners really. So you're the head but you're kind of like a figurehead almost in certain ways because you have to work as a team with your wife and stuff like that....But the head of the household I still think should lead the house at home too.<sup>100</sup>

John explained his thoughts on this type of leadership in terms of servanthood:

It's a leading where the wife is willing to follow because she sees the heart of the husband. So there's no coercion or no sense of domination but there is like a true personhood acceptance for both people. The man and the wife become more fully who they should be because of that. So my theory is that in any household the woman has the option of being completely dominant in the household. And if the wife isn't happy, she can ruin it for everybody. But then it's like her role to submit and it's the guy's role to take that leadership so that they can become more fully who God has them to be.<sup>101</sup>

I believe part of this thinking stems from leading evangelicals who hold to a *complementarian* view of household relationships. While men and women are equal in value, they are given different biblically-mandated roles, the most notable one stating that the man should lead. It is important to point out that it is not only the men who espouse this belief, but women who also advocate this ideology. Brian, responding to my question of what a man leading in marriage looks like, raised an indelible memory:

One thing that also sticks out with me is that, the head Hillsong pastor and his wife, who also has a female conference, she had said

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<sup>100</sup> Interview #14

<sup>101</sup> Interview #3

something that still sticks out with me. She pretty much called out all of the men saying...that if you want your wife to support you and be by your side, then stand up as leaders so that they can support you and if you're not going to be a leader, then it causes so many problems.<sup>102</sup>

What I find interesting is that the men who hold to this view are single and never married, though not all single men who have never married hold this view. There were a few that held to an *egalitarian* view of marriage where household roles are negotiated in mutual ways between husband and wife. Furthermore, I found that the basis for their gender role ideology comes largely from spiritual and biblical understandings and not simply from cultural tradition as several men alluded to what they observe in many first-generation marriages. I noticed that Christian spirituality based largely upon one's interpretation of the Bible is a major force in determining the men's understanding of male spirituality.

It would be remiss however to overstate that spirituality only influenced men towards complementarian gender ideology. Spirituality (in addition to simply being married) was one of the reasons why two of the married men changed their stance on women in leadership and ordination. On account of their theological training and having been exposed to women and their call to ministry, these two men changed their views in favor of a woman's spiritual authority and leadership. Ryan, for instance, changed when he felt that

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<sup>102</sup> Interview #6

seminary women could articulate their call to ordination and ministry better than he or other men he knew could:

I was like, how can I tell this [woman] that you cannot be a pastor and [that] the journey that you went through and your calling is invalid? Who's to say that my own journey and calling is valid because I'm a man? So from that point on I started to question a lot of things that I was taught and also the traditional definitions of what roles men and women play.<sup>103</sup>

Another man reasoned that he and his wife slowly evolved to a more egalitarian household on account of their spiritual growth.

Christ Church's position on women in leadership appears different from the more conservative stances of other Korean American churches and Christians. Several conversations I had with Korean American women at Christ Church revealed how some outside of Christ Church viewed it as liberal and "unbiblical." Susan for instance, shared that when friends of hers (a heterosexual couple) had visited the church and saw a woman leading worship on the guitar, they shared with Susan afterwards in a sincere way their concern that she was attending a church that was "unbiblical."<sup>104</sup> According to Susan, it was the female friend who was the more vociferous of the two. As Susan told me this story, she asked me if I had any plans to interview or observe other churches for she believed that Christ Church was on the extremely progressive end of Korean American churches in terms of gender ideology and women in spiritual leadership. An early worship gathering

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<sup>103</sup> Interview #2

<sup>104</sup> Field notes, March 27, 2011.



of second-generation Korean American churches for Easter sunrise service seems to validate the idea that Korean American churches are generally conservative concerning gender and spiritual leadership. As I attended this service, I noticed that among all of the public leaders, there was only one female present. She served as the back-up vocalist to the male worship leader on the praise team. The pastors involved in the worship were all males. Women were most visible during the hour following the service, having cooked and served the fellowship meal to those who came.<sup>105</sup>

In some ways, Christ Church is noticeably different than this portrait of Korean American churches. There is one part-time female pastor on staff that is not a children or youth pastor but a pastor to the adult community.<sup>106</sup> When serving publically in worship, she led the call to worship, gave announcements, and helped to administer communion with other pastoral staff. Although she did not preach during the time of my formal research, I have witnessed her preach on occasion to the adult congregation, taking turns approximately once a quarter with the other associate male pastors. There has been one female worship leader during my years at the church (she has since left), although during my formal research the worship leaders (a rotation of four) were all men. Women helped to serve as ushers and in other areas of church leadership. The food preparation was not relegated to women

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<sup>105</sup> Field notes, April 24, 2011.

<sup>106</sup> The senior pastor is the only full-time pastor.

exclusively. Men and women as singles, couples, and family groups shared in the preparation of food for the whole fellowship. Moreover, the leader of the food ministry is a male.

Though staffing and public roles appear to be more egalitarian at Christ Church than at other Korean American churches, the language used for God in worship reflects more masculine images. The sermon I heard on the first day of observation was on the topic of the Lord's Prayer highlighting that while many equate the "Our Father" in similar fashion to our earthly fathers, it is erroneous thinking for the imperfect actions of earthly fathers do not reflect the actions and concern of the heavenly "Father."<sup>107</sup> Though the pastor never made an explicit correlation of God as male, and the sermon point was to refrain from equating the perfect qualities of the heavenly Father with our limited earthly fathers (and not a commentary on the sex of God) I wonder what implicit message is received at Christ Church through the constant use of masculine pronouns to speak of God.<sup>108</sup> The worship leaders continually referred to God in their speech as "Father" "Abba" "Our heavenly Father," used the gender exclusive pronoun "he" or "him," sang songs with titles or phrases such as "Father of Lights" "Humble King" "Let Us Adore Him," and often encouraged the congregation to imagine themselves with "you and him alone right now" as a way to encourage intimacy between God and oneself. My

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<sup>107</sup> Field notes, January 30, 2011.

<sup>108</sup> Ruth C. Duck, *Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 69-72.

concern with this exclusive vernacular is that it reinforces the current sociocultural structure in which Korean American men live and the patriarchal privilege that is consistently engendered to the detriment of women, girls, men, and boys. One could argue that the highly patriarchal images and ideology found in our churches and spirituality contribute in part to any misogyny and degrading of women among Korean American men in society.<sup>109</sup>

While this gender-exclusive language was common during my research, I bring to light two instances that suggest the potentiality and growth of Christ Church with this issue. During one worship service, the pastor performed a double baptism first with a mother and then her child.<sup>110</sup> Prior to the sprinkling of the water upon the mother's head, the pastor read as part of the liturgy a passage that imaged the water as the "womb of new birth."<sup>111</sup> This was the first time I had heard any feminine imagery used in worship at Christ Church, particularly as it referred to the work of God. A second instance

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<sup>109</sup> As I was writing my second draft, a friend tuned me into an overwhelmingly popular internet video series entitled, "Ktown Cowboys." Much in the vein of pop-culture reality shows such as "Jersey Shore," the overall plot of the videos has to do with a group of second-generation Korean American men that introduces Los Angeles Koreatown to a recent East Coast transplant. What becomes quickly apparent in the various episodes is the performance of masculinity and male bonding at the degradation of women. Women are often seen as sex objects and used for masculine rites of passage. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-TLWOwbW24>.

<sup>110</sup> Christ Church's theological stance on baptism is such that the act of baptism is an acknowledgement of God's work upon the person which is later confirmed at a later time (confirmation). Therefore infant baptism is encouraged and welcomed.

<sup>111</sup> Field notes, February 27, 2011.

occurred when the pastor preached on women and men in ministry and the call for the priesthood of *all* believers. Following the service, there was a question and answer period where two seminary-trained women who are each on respective ordination tracks, fielded questions and shared their personal struggles and experiences concerning Asian American women in ministry in Asian American churches.<sup>112</sup> This was the first time I had experienced any Asian American pastor addressing the issue of women spiritual leadership through the pulpit during worship. Interestingly, one of the questions fielded by the two women was given by another woman asking how they see themselves in their families in relation to the “Biblical” mandate for men to be the heads of the household. According to a later conversation I had with one of the panelists, the woman who asked the question was operating out of the assumption that all families understand or should understand the “head of the household” passage in a complementarian manner where the man is the spiritual leader.

### Conclusion

Though Sharon Kim is correct to point out that hybridity accurately demarcates second-generation Korean American spirituality from either American evangelicalism or first-generation Korean American spirituality alone, I offer a further point for reflection: Through the lens of gender, one can

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<sup>112</sup> July 31, 2011.

argue that second-generation Korean American Christians have more in common with these two constituencies who perpetuate gender bias and hierarchy through near exclusion in spiritually authoritative positions of high visibility,<sup>113</sup> language in worship, and spheres outside of the Church, such as the home. I argue this by illustrating the heavy influence American evangelicalism and Korean spirituality have had upon Korean American spirituality. While I agree with Kim that Korean American spirituality is diverse, emergent, and therefore something slightly different, its foundational building blocks are noticeable and must be considered. Gender ideologies—based largely upon American evangelicalism and fundamentalism—maintain traditional beliefs regarding men and women and their gender roles which meld rather conveniently with the tenets of Confucianism, one of the major social philosophies of life that influences Korean Americans. Gender cannot go unanalyzed when the foundational cores of both American evangelicalism and Confucianism contribute heavily to Korean American spirituality in both practice and in ideology.

While this proliferation of traditional gender ideology appears to be the case in my informal observations of Korean American churches elsewhere and among several of the men I interviewed, there exists at Christ Church, a church and group of second-generation Korean American men that are

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<sup>113</sup> Min, "Structure and Social Functions," 1389-90.

refashioning this mold. Several of them are committed to more egalitarian values in their (potential) marriages on account of their spirituality.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> The majority of the interviews took place after a men's small group had a lesson and discussion on the household. However, several of the men I interviewed were not at this meeting and therefore not privy to its content. Additionally, all but one of the interviews took place before the pastor's sermon on mutual leadership in the Church.

## CHAPTER 4

### SPORTS AND KOREAN AMERICAN MEN

#### Introduction

Imagine a county park with a row of tall trees lining the outer edge of a large opening. In the opening is a grassy field. It is a sunny Saturday in southern California, which, as one might expect, means there are several different athletic events occurring. Soccer, softball, more soccer, and football are taking place this day. Adult male Hispanics play their weekly soccer league match; white friends of mixed gender gather to play recreational softball; kids of diverse races run around in a mob to chase a ball in what appears to be a youth league game of soccer. One may be surprised however when they turn their attention to the footballers. Here, on the grassy field in the large opening are over two-hundred men, mostly Korean American and second-generation, who have gathered to play in a semi-annual flag-football tournament. They represent sixteen different Korean American churches from the greater Los Angeles area and come with intricate formations, elaborate plays, uniforms, and unquestioned passion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Korean American” here refers to the *second-generation* Korean American churches. These churches are either completely independent second-generation Korean American English-speaking ministries (i.e., having no financial or spatial ties to a mother church) or the English-speaking ministries of a first-generation Korean American church (i.e., have both independent and dependent responsibilities towards a first-generation church). Furthermore, the tournaments of which I speak, unless otherwise noted, are

I summarize my argument to this point: Korean American men are complex social beings whose gender constructions of masculinity are largely the result of social and spiritual influences. I propose in the previous chapters that on account of social scripts and realities that disempower Korean American men, they look to other sites and facets of life to gain a measure of social power and status. When they do so, they are not only able to grasp a better sense of who they are, but perhaps more significantly, who they are as men, and men in society. I offer this chapter on men and sports as a specific example of the way I see Korean American men playing out (pun intended) their masculinity—they are performing gender and often do so in hypermasculine ways. What makes this data all the more interesting is that these highly competitive and hypermasculine forms of gender performance occur not within a city league or an informal game of pick-up football but in highly organized church-sponsored tournaments.

After a brief introduction into the world of two Korean-American church football tournaments, I spend a considerable portion mapping out various existing theories in the field of the sociology of sports to interpret the social phenomena of contemporary sports in America. I then integrate this theory with empirical data to make a case that through sports, Korean American men now have an alluring opportunity to socially construct and perform their

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for second-generation Korean Americans. There are separate tournaments for the first generation.



masculinity. I also point out that unfortunately, this masculinity is based upon a hegemonic ideal that valorizes posturing and destructive competitiveness. For some, it does not matter that these tournaments are sponsored by Korean American churches; they are public opportunities to showcase one's manhood. For others, they believe spirituality should account for something when people step onto the field and therefore try to reshape these hegemonic standards.

#### Korean American Church Sports Tournaments

Turkeybowl and the Fruit of the Spirit Bowl (FOTS)—two football tournaments—symbolize the energy and significance of church sports events for Korean Americans in southern California.<sup>2</sup> These two tournaments are held in the Fall and late Winter respectively and attract not only numerous participants, but equally passionate fans who eagerly root for their church.<sup>3</sup> A secured spot in one of the sixteen slots are often a premium. It is not uncommon to see a waiting list of churches that were unable to give a

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to the ethnography and interviews I conducted for my research, I have participated in the football tournaments for over five years. For all sports, there are over six different tournaments per year that are organized for Korean American churches and men. This does not include the tournaments for Korean American women or the tournaments for the first generation.

<sup>3</sup> During the last Turkeybowl in which I participated, our team had reached the semi-finals. The opposing team's fans had secured two vuvuzelas, the extraordinarily loud plastic horns made famous in the 2010 South African World Cup, which made it impossible to hear any of our quarterback's audible calls.

participation commitment by the tournament director's deadline. Preference is given to churches who participated the previous year thus making it difficult for a new church to participate; they have to wait for a church to pull out.<sup>4</sup> Several years ago, instead of waiting to hear word about their entrance into a tournament, one of the waiting-list churches began their own tournament that ran simultaneously in the same park, thus bringing the total number of churches to over twenty for that year.<sup>5</sup> The vigor shown by the sheer numbers involved is enhanced when one considers that these are only two of many different sports tournaments organized throughout the year. While the number of tournaments hosted may be particular to the region, Korean American church sports tournaments is not a local phenomenon either as San Diego churches gather annually on Labor Day to play in a day-long grass volleyball tournament, and other indoor volleyball tournaments take place among Chicago and New Jersey area churches.<sup>6</sup>

There are several ways to analyze and discuss these annual sporting events. On the one hand, to the casual observer, these events yield a simple, cursory reading: they are no more than a gathering of adults who compete in

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<sup>4</sup> Having served as a captain and organizer for our church, I have had first-hand experience with much of what I describe including the numerous communications from the tournament directors to the captains of the participating churches.

<sup>5</sup> The Korean American churches in Orange County, a neighboring county of Los Angeles, organize their own sports tournaments including their own Turkeybowl.

<sup>6</sup> I know of these tournaments from either having participated in them or from having discussed them with pastors from participating churches.

organized, competitive play and churches who gather to fellowship. In some sense, they are not much different in action than the personal and collective enjoyment shared at a local little league baseball game. On the other hand, a critical reading produces a much more complex and dynamic interpretation. These tournaments are not simply sites of physical activity and enjoyment, they are sites that produce, reproduce and change gender, cultural, racial, and spiritual beliefs.

### Social Theories to Interpret Sport

I turn now to several theories to construct a theoretical frame as a way to discuss Korean American men and their involvement in church sports. Critical feminists and cultural critics have exposed, if anything, the multivalent and political nature of sport. Sport should not, nor cannot be taken at face value on account of the forces that contribute to the production of meaning within a cultural non-literary "text."<sup>7</sup> Sport, as a cultural product laden with social and political significance, now becomes a site to be read critically for the purposes of analyzing axes of social power in interlocking fashion.<sup>8</sup> Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald remind us that a critical reading of sport provides another look into gender, race, class, and so forth, as "relations of

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<sup>7</sup> Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald, eds., *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representation* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Mary G. McDonald and Susan Birrell, "Reading Sport Critically: A Methodology for Interrogating Power," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 16 (1999): 283-300.

power” and not as static categories.<sup>9</sup> Therefore Korean American men at church sports tournaments cannot be read simply as a racial group of men playing organized sports competitively together. Rather, their histories and socially-constructed realities in a context such as the United States, together with their own subjective experiences, make for a complex interpretation of what occurs on a Saturday twice a year.

I begin with Jay Coakley’s five different social theories to interpret sport. These include: (1) functionalist, (2) conflict, (3) critical, (4) critical feminist and (5) symbolic interactionist theories.<sup>10</sup>

### *Functionalist Theory*

Functionalist theory attempts to explain how society works to maintain stability through the sharing of values, beliefs, and organization. The more society can agree in unity and harmony, the better it functions as a well-oiled machine. It works therefore to maintain the status quo rather than disrupt it. In sport, functional theorists believe that sport can be and is used to produce values and characteristics that are important for the functioning of society as a whole and the progress of individuals within that society. For instance, the idea of teamwork and drive are two positive values that arise out of the organization of sport. Because individual members work towards a common cause, they

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<sup>9</sup> Birrell and McDonald, *Reading Sport*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Jay J Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 9th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2007), 32-52.

are presented through sport with opportunities to work through differences and come to some resolution when these differences are in conflict. Sport is thus encouraged because it produces many individual and societal benefits.

Several of the men who had played in at least one church football tournament noted in the interviews two primary goals of these tournaments: fellowship and evangelism. Abe sums up best this idea of fellowship and male bonding:

I think that sports [are] one way God has given us an avenue between brothers. It's amazing how it can break through boundaries....I'm a big advocate [of sports] because it connects brothers like no other thing can, really fast.<sup>11</sup>

A major caveat however of functionalist theory in relation to sport, is that it assumes that all people arrive at the same meaning for sport and sports participation. That is, it does not consider well the complexities of meaning that are attached to one's investment in sport. The chief executive officer of a television network may have a completely different stake in sport as does the single parent of a child on a local youth soccer team. Though they both have an investment in sport, the reasons behind these cause conflict as to whether to maintain the current reality of sport or to question it.

When I asked the research partners what they thought of FOTS<sup>12</sup> and how they reconcile what they see (i.e., hyper-competitiveness and extreme

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<sup>11</sup> Interview #14

<sup>12</sup> Because it is shorter to write, I will use FOTS as representative of both football tournaments since I observe no major differences or dynamics between the two tournaments. Furthermore, because I conducted my ethnography at FOTS, I will keep my terminology consistent.

aggression) with the fact that the tournament is a church-sponsored tournament, most of them answered with the qualifier, "I know that it's supposed to be for fellowship or outreach but..." The men followed this by giving a complexity of answers including winning, looking good in front of his teammates, spectators, girlfriends and other women, and becoming *the man*.

### *Conflict Theory*

Generally, conflict theory runs counter to functional theory. While these two theories agree that society exists as a system of integrated beliefs, values, and organization, they differ in that conflict theory views the economy, and not "general system needs," as the driving force behind equilibrium.<sup>13</sup> Rooted in Karl Marx's critiques of industrial and capitalist societies, the theory questions the imbalance of the control of production. Therefore as the theory relates to sports in society, it questions the disproportion of control between the owners of competitive sport, the athletes (those who produce sport) and the average fan (the consumer of sport). The theory argues that the production of sport would look much differently if it were more in the hands of the athletes than the upper-echelon owners. However, since contemporary sport is controlled largely by the owners, there is a push by those who control power, to maintain what currently exists in sports since it reinforces the economic benefits of the elite often at the expense of the lower classes. The National Football League

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<sup>13</sup> Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 39.

and the NFL Players' Union only recently resolved a heated labor dispute after the owners administered a lockout of players, thus setting off a maelstrom of lawsuits and bargaining maneuvers.<sup>14</sup>

There are several limitations however to conflict theory. First, it lacks consideration of the complexity of reasons that sustain the institution of sport. Though sport in contemporary society does carry strong underpinnings related to its commodification by media and the market and those of the economically elite, it would be remiss to believe that these are the only considerable factors that sustain sport. People participate in and consume sports for behavioral, cognitive, and affective reasons, not simply as passive bystanders of a larger system.<sup>15</sup> There is some measure of individual agency; it is not simply a social, economic machine. Second, sport is maintained not merely by those in control of the means of production, but by persons of all classes. Though the television executive might emphasize the financial side in contrast to the single parent who may stress the social interaction afforded her or his child, they both have an investment in perpetuating sport. Finally, closely related to the first two limitations, conflict theory does not consider well other factors such as

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<sup>14</sup> "Judge Says N.F.L. Lockout Ruling to Take 'Couple of Weeks'," *New York Times*, April 6, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/sports/football/07nfl.html?ref=football> (accessed April 7, 11).

<sup>15</sup> Barry D. McPherson, James E. Curtis, and John W. Loy, *The Social Significance of Sport: An Introduction to the Sociology of Sport* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1989), 11-14.

race, gender, and spirituality that contribute to the social construction of sport and its significance in society and individual's lives.

### *Critical Theory*

Arising out of the Frankfurt School during the first half of the twentieth century, critical theory questions the organization of society particularly examining existing power relations among persons and groups of people.<sup>16</sup> It pries into the way organizations are structured and seeks to delve below the surface to uncover complex realities. Critical theorists are not content to maintain the status quo for by doing so people contribute to oppressive realities that keep persons from understanding the intricacies that generate injustice.

In sport therefore, critical theory, often asks questions that address the behind-the-scene issues displayed in sport, the “back regions” as some scholars have quipped.<sup>17</sup> While a functionalist may view sport as a site that strengthens the moral character of teammates and even of society (e.g., how sport brings persons of all classes together), the critical theorist might question the frequent and unnecessary (for the athlete and viewer) television time-out breaks during the course of a basketball game. It is not uncommon to see a television time-out within seconds after a coach's time-out simply because it is

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen D. Brookfield, *The Power of Critical Theory: Liberating Adult Learning and Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> McPherson, Curtis, and Loy, *Social Significance of Sport*.



under a certain time interval, regardless of when a previous one was taken. This type of questioning would lead to a discussion of the contractual obligations the governing body of the sport and the teams involved have with the sponsoring television network, which may lead to a whole host of other inquiries. This then is a goal of critical theory and its byproduct, critical thinking: to make complex that which appears simple in order to address injustices produced by a social institution such as sport.

On account of its stance towards advocacy, a shortcoming of critical theory in relation to sport may, as seen in the previous theories, be its lack of consideration to the wide range of social meaning and significance people bring to sports. For instance, though critical theory works to reverse patterns and ideologies that keep marginal persons from freely or equally participating in sports, advocates fighting the corporate commodification of sport, particularly among urban African American youth, may have difficulty balancing advocacy with the reality that these youth now have equipment with which to play.<sup>18</sup> The work of critical theorists at levels of systemic change might alter the ability of an individual to participate in and enjoy a sport.

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<sup>18</sup> Judith Waldrop, "Shades of Black," *American Demographics* September 1, 1990, 34; E. Bun Lee and Louis A. Browne, "Effects of Television Advertising On African American Teenagers," *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 5 (1995): 523-36.

### *Feminist Theory*

Feminist theory builds upon critical theory as it introduces gender as a vital issue to the discourse of social stratification. Early feminist thought sought to make gender the critical piece of social analysis. However, later feminist thought would advance the earlier version by advocating for a fuller and interdependent look of gender and other axes that contribute to social power. One axis (e.g., gender) is not sufficient or accurate enough to critique cultural reproduction and social organization but must be done through a “prism of difference”<sup>19</sup> or a “matrix of domination.”<sup>20</sup> One experiences life differently on account of their social location. That is, one’s social locale is affected by one’s combination of race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc., and while one axis of power can be highlighted in discourse, it must always be done in relation to the others for a different combination of axes will shift social status and thus meaning from context to context.<sup>21</sup>

In light of sport, feminist theory first looked to critique the differences of sports participation at all levels through the lens of gender. Critiques concerning the unequal participation of women in sports for instance took

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<sup>19</sup> Maxine Baca Zinn, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Michael A. Messner, eds., *Gender through the Prism of Difference*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 222.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

center stage.<sup>22</sup> However as feminist theories developed, sport was now analyzed through several different lenses.<sup>23</sup> An integrated look into the world of sports became the main focus of feminist theorists and as a result, questions posed in earlier feminist thought now reflected a difference in depth and breadth.<sup>24</sup>

The logic of this theory reveals its challenge and perhaps weakness: because it calls for a particular and nuanced look into lived experiences, one now sees the dearth of literature and research regarding the myriad experiences of individuals in sport. We cannot dichotomize person's experiences as simply male or female and generalize them for all males and females. Furthermore, because critical feminist theory is based upon principles of social construction and knowledge in the particular, one may wonder about the value of a great number of potential studies if these constructions continue to shift and thus change meaning. Does looking through a matrix of domination only situate individual's experiences into silos others are unable to fathom on account that they are not second-generation Korean American?

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<sup>22</sup> Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, eds., introduction to *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1990), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Birrell and Cheryl L. Cole, eds., *Women, Sport, and Culture* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994); Messner and Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*.

<sup>24</sup> Critical feminist theory appears to depict best this development among feminist theories as it incorporates many of the previously mentioned theories into an integrated methodology for critical analysis particularly as it relates to issues of power.

While the focus of this chapter is to get a glimpse of second-generation Korean American men and their subjective experiences through the world of church sports, and not necessarily a discursive exercise in postmodern dilemmas of identity politics, experiential knowledge, and competing value systems, I will offer that a key assumption of my whole dissertation is that studying a particular group (knowing well the caution of essentializing the group) can provide an entry into larger discussions concerning vital social issues and the human condition. For instance, the reasons that compel Korean American men to behave in the way they do at church sports tournaments may say something about their response to being historically and systematically racialized in the United States, their lack of social power, readings upon their sexuality, and their own beliefs about their physical bodies. This says much then about relations of social power and person's involvement with it.

### *Interactionism*

Interactionist theory maintains that as persons interact with one another, they create a system of shared symbols which in turn, give meaning to current and future exchanges.<sup>25</sup> One finds that a shared construction of social meaning runs common throughout each of the theories. Interactionist theory differs however in its emphasis and place of entry into a critical

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<sup>25</sup> Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 47.

discourse of sport.<sup>26</sup> Whereas the previous theories analyze the surrounding structures (e.g., economy, patriarchy) to provide assistance in reading sport, interactionist theory focuses upon behavior at the interpersonal level.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore analyses of a participant's identity, reasons for participation, and personal reflections upon her or his involvement become the main focus of this approach. The primary intent is to "understand social worlds from the inside—through the perspectives of the people who create, maintain, and change them....[It is] to view culture and society from the bottom up rather than the top down."<sup>28</sup>

Two interrelated weaknesses emerge with this theory. First, caution is given toward the tendency to overlook structural and systemic dynamics when attempting to understand interpersonal subjectivity and meaning. Bryan Turner's reflections of the body in society and Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony highlight this concern.<sup>29</sup> Turner argues that while one may choose to represent oneself uniquely, this representation is the result of structural influences that consciously or subconsciously inform a desirable imagination

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<sup>26</sup> While each of these theories consider elements of the other and are not "pure" in this sense, for theoretical purposes, I will consider them distinct from one another understanding the risk of sounding reductionist.

<sup>27</sup> Messner and Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 48.

<sup>29</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); McDonald and Birrell, "Reading Sport Critically," 287-88.

of the self.<sup>30</sup> One might choose to act in self-definition, but on account of powerful, structural forces such as the media, one's concept of self is highly influenced by these.

Gramsci's theory is similar in thought. He offers a compromise between structuralist notions that view systemic apparatuses as greatly impacting the self and culturalist approaches that view the human as prevailing agent in its ability to resist these apparatuses. For Gramsci, influence is had not through domination and force but through a struggle of ideological influence.<sup>31</sup> People from below accept ideologies from above as normative, even those that may contribute to their oppression. In doing so persons are unknowingly complicit in their oppression.

The emphasis placed upon the subjectivity of the participant(s) involved in sports contributes to a second weakness. It is difficult sometimes to suggest visionary changes in organization and structure towards fairness and equality when focus is placed primarily upon the participant's meaning-making.

### *An Integrated Approach*

My theoretical approach in interpreting Korean American men playing sport is to consider each of these with emphasis upon the last three. I emphasize the last three because I am interested in studying how masculinity is engendered among these men who play sports. Furthermore, as critical

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<sup>30</sup> Turner, *Body and Society*, 25-29.

<sup>31</sup> McDonald and Birrell, "Reading Sport Critically," 288.

feminist theory cautions, I look to the construction of gender as a complex process of power rather than a pure theory concerned only with gendered experiences. While one can observe how men use FOTS to construct social significance and personal empowerment, critical feminist theory continues to remind us of the violent and oppressive dynamics that exist in contemporary sport and how these dynamics are often the result of reinforced social meaning.<sup>32</sup> Critical feminist theory argues that while men are empowered in sport, sport simultaneously reinforces the unequal relations (most notably gender and age) often experienced in Korean American communities and families because of the gender ideology (i.e., hegemonic male) it portrays. Yet while I use critical feminist theory heavily, I also utilize interactionist theory to explore the way Korean American men make meaning through the ritual of competitive sport.

By laying out these theoretical foundations in conjunction with the qualitative research I conducted, I hope to show the complexity that exists for Korean American men, particularly in light of the sports they consume.

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<sup>32</sup> Mariah Burton Nelson, *The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football: Sexism and the American Culture of Sports* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994); Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, *Sex, Violence and Power in Sports: Rethinking Masculinity* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1994); Jim McKay, Michael A. Messner, and Donald F. Sabo, eds., *Masculinities, Gender Relations, and Sport* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), Part Two.

Playing by the Rules of Hegemonic Masculinity:  
Korean American Men Play Sports

In any good competitive sport, there are certain rules and guidelines by which to abide. Without them, disorganization and chaotic play reign; with them however, come the possibility of boundary-shaping, social cohesion, and enjoyment. Rules are boundaries that inform players what is acceptable or unacceptable action. When explicit rules are broken, a player gets thrown in the penalty box, receives a foul, or marked with some other form of violation or an infraction. When it comes to implicit rules of the game—baseball has many of these (e.g., do not step on the pitching mound during a switch between innings unless you are the pitcher)—break these and opposing teams find ways outside the jurisdiction of the referee to enforce a message that this type of conduct is unacceptable (e.g., throwing at the player when he next comes up to bat). In the following section, I propose that there are certain “rules” or normative discourses hegemonic masculinity produces in contemporary sports. By sports, I mean not only an actual competition, but the undercurrents that go into constructing what sport is today. These undercurrents include play and athleticism, but also include the economic market and social power. I will analyze the play of Korean American men to further this argument.

For my research, I conducted a day-long participant observation at FOTS and culled data from the interviews of research partners who have



participated at least once in this tournament.<sup>33</sup> I noticed a continuum of the ways players conduct themselves on the field. On the one hand, there are those players that seem to play in a way that appears no different than the media-driven images of contemporary sports and hegemonic masculinity: the tough, rugged, I-don't-cry image of the conquering sports athlete. Ultimate Fighting Championship (i.e., UFC), Mixed Martial Arts (i.e., MMA), and professional sports in the United States such as the National Football League, overwhelmingly glorify and build their business markets and ideological image around the notion of redemptive violence and the victorious hero.<sup>34</sup> The "pain principle" informs men that playing through pain is courageous and when you don't, you become sissified.<sup>35</sup> "Conquer or you will be conquered" is the unofficial motto of this type of masculinity. It is often displayed in phrases such as "going to battle," "pulling up your jockstrap," and "be a man," while also demonstrated in trying to "one up" your opponent by "showing him up" or "joking him out of his jock." In the midst of a highly-charged game I observed, an ultra-competitive player went up to another player after his team scored a touchdown, got in his face, pointed at the player and said, "How do you like

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<sup>33</sup> Though my formal research was limited to one tournament, I have participated in these tournaments for over five years and have critically reflected and processed these tournaments since the beginning. On average, I have participated in two to four church sports tournaments per year.

<sup>34</sup> Michael A. Messner, *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 67-71.

<sup>35</sup> Donald F. Sabo, "Pigskin, Patriarchy and Pain," in *Sex, Violence and Power in Sports: Rethinking Masculinity*, ed. Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1994), 86.

that number five?!”<sup>36</sup> Later, this same player after another successful play went up to a different player of the opposing team and yelled, “How do you like that number thirty-three?” At the end of one of the practices I attended prior to the tournament, the team captains informed the newer players to keep their “head on a swivel” throughout the tournament because there are many players that are willing to administer a cheap shot during a play.<sup>37</sup> One man described the play at FOTS this way: “A lot of guys just want to win. If they can break your leg and they can win by breaking your leg, they’re going to break your leg, and that’s unfortunate.”<sup>38</sup> One year, according to the tournament director, a player had become so incensed with the actions of his counterpart that after the game, he went to his car and retrieved a bat from his trunk with the intent to come back and beat the other player up.<sup>39</sup>

The hyper-competitiveness and hypermasculinity exhibited at these tournaments can be explained in part through a mixture of the theories previously mentioned. Michael A. Messner has written extensively on the influence contemporary sport, through media and the economic market, has upon society. Building upon Sut Jhally’s term, *sports-media complex* (i.e. media’s influential and integrated nature with contemporary sport), Messner adds commercialization to the term (*sports-media-commercial complex*) to

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<sup>36</sup>Field research, March 19, 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Field notes, March 6, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Interview #14

<sup>39</sup> Personal conversation, April 11, 2010.

demonstrate how contemporary sport is an institution replete with global and economic influences that vie for society's and the consumer's attention. Sport is not simply an autonomous institution of exercise and competition but a convoluted location of competing forces. The sports-media-commercial complex shapes the way society understands success and significance and provides images of what should be important (compare with Gramsci's and Turner's theories above).<sup>40</sup> Reports on the most recent Super Bowl (XLV) illustrate the massive and integrated institution sports and the market have become. The game between the Green Bay Packers and the Pittsburgh Steelers for instance, was the most watched event and the most expensive program in television history having cost each thirty-second commercial slot three million dollars.<sup>41</sup> In the United States, eight of the top ten television broadcasts in 2010 were sporting events while the top soccer clubs globally are multimillion dollar companies that help create a multibillion dollar industry.<sup>42</sup> Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Fila, Puma and other shoe and clothing companies market their star athletes as persons to imitate from head to toe. Images of Michael Jordan playing through a virus that caused him to throw up multiple times in a game during the 1997 NBA finals, Brett Favre competing as

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<sup>40</sup> Michael A Messner, *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 76-90.

<sup>41</sup> It beat out MASH's last episode. See David Gelles and Andrew Edgecliff-Johnson, "Television: Inflated Assets," *Financial Times*, March 24 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/473fe418-2c96-11e0-83bd-00144feab49a.html#axzz1HHi77qej> (accessed April 11, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

the “iron man” with multiple injuries through the last few years of his career, and Tiger Woods having come out of a self-imposed hiatus from golf during the months following his marital scandal to play at the 2010 Masters tournament also contribute to the notion of the courageous athlete who competes at all costs. While marketers present an image of heroism, conflict and critical feminist theories ask at what cost and for whose benefit?

As these theories look to the macro concerns, interactionist theory considers these structural causes with the intent of understanding interpersonal explanations of Korean American men’s behaviors in sports. Richard Major argues that sports is a site where black men resist structural racism and institutional barriers.<sup>43</sup> Because Blacks do not have the same structural opportunities as that of mostly Whites, “black males’ appropriation of sport as an arena of self-expression is an example of human agency operating within structural constraints.”<sup>44</sup> Sports become a site of cultural resistance and creativity.

Historically, sports have served Asian Americans similarly in their resistance to racism and have provided a form of “cultural citizenship,” the idea that Asian Americans belong as citizens even with mixed cultures and

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Majors, “Cool Pose: Black Masculinity and Sports,” in *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1990).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

heritages.<sup>45</sup> For instance, Nisei Japanese Americans created sports leagues as a way to counter the social ostracism and institutional racism they experienced in the first half of the 1900s and particularly during World War II internment.<sup>46</sup> Chinese Americans did the same with basketball not only exhibiting their self-agency, but their ability to counter dominant stereotypes of Asian Americans, those of the unathletic and uncoordinated Asian.<sup>47</sup>

The responses of the research partners appear similar to this idea of cultural citizenship—creating space and cultural events to prove that one belongs. The difference however between the Chinese and Japanese before them is that for these Korean Americans, proving oneself is largely in relation to other Korean Americans. That is, validation of one's skill and ability comes from the hands of fellow Korean Americans, not other racial groups. Other races seem to be viewed as a threat to one's ability to succeed. Moreover, when this threat is taken out of the equation (i.e., an ethnic-specific tournament) showcasing one's manhood and ability often comes at the expense of another Korean American. They compete *against* Korean

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<sup>45</sup> Joel S. Frank, *Crossing Sidelines, Crossing Cultures: Sport and Asian Pacific American Cultural Citizenship* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), introduction.

<sup>46</sup> David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Kathleen S. Yep, *Outside the Paint: When Basketball Ruled at the Chinese Playground* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

Americans rather than *with* Korean Americans, akin to competing gangs of the same ethnicity.

Rodney begins to answer my question (What do you see going on in FOTS in terms of masculinity?) in the following way: "Sometimes, I think, well this is their outlet," pointing to how Korean American men who no longer have intramural sports or pick-up games in which to participate, use FOTS as competitive exercise.<sup>48</sup> He would continue however to add:

But you know I also see kind of maybe pent up or maybe frustration...you know maybe growing up not being able to do these things for whatever reasons. Maybe their parents didn't let them play football because they had to study or something like that. But also maybe [because] they couldn't compete against, you know, against non-Koreans, against these big white guys. And you know, being at a tournament like this where the playing field is predominantly Asian and therefore a more even playing field, yeah, they feel like they can kind of show their stuff.<sup>49</sup>

Charles adds that:

FOTS is a bunch of Koreans trying to prove themselves, pretty much trying to say, "Hey, I'm different from you," you know, or like "I'm stronger than you." It's like a great place to showcase your masculinity, how strong you are. And then you see a white guy or a Mexican guy and you're like, "Hey, that's a ringer" and you know that they are probably better than all of the Koreans here....It's an opportunity for people that don't get opportunities to showcase themselves.<sup>50</sup>

He would later offer that playing in FOTS makes him "feel so masculine" and then reflect, "If I played in a white FOTS, it would be different. I'd be more...intimidated. But I actually feel more empowered when I play in a

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<sup>48</sup> Interview #15

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Interview #13

Korean FOTS.”<sup>51</sup> Abe believes that for the participating men, FOTS offers them a legitimate opportunity to succeed. Here he impersonates them: “We can win! We can win! This is one place I can win!”<sup>52</sup>

Although, as I have pointed out, the use of sports as social resistance by the Chinese and Japanese differs slightly from the Korean Americans who use it as personal proving ground, Korean Americans resist (at least personally) evolving notions of “orientalism”—images placed upon Orientals (read Asian Americans) by Westerners and their discourses.<sup>53</sup> One might argue that playing football regularly is Korean American men’s own version of the “cool pose” black male athletes exhibit for the purposes of gaining social status and power.<sup>54</sup> In a society that is becoming increasingly inundated with sport and places great value on athletic performance, sport is a site where men can realize that they too belong and prove their manhood, even if it is against other Korean American men.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Interview #13

<sup>52</sup> Interview #14

<sup>53</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>54</sup> Majors, “Cool Pose.”

<sup>55</sup> Ross Runfola argues that the workings of white society have contributed to the super-machismo attitude of black men through two ways. First, they have cut off black men from other arenas of social life (intellectual, political, and economic) while two, having provided sports as an “opiate for the black masses” as a way to keep them socially contained. Thus black men who are limited in the ways they can feel socially empowered, are “encouraged...to prove their worth by ‘making it’ with their body.” See Ross Runfola, “The Black Athlete as Super-Machismo Symbol,” in *Jock: Sports and Male Identity*, by

Interestingly though, these tournaments that are sponsored for Korean American churches and are played mostly by Korean Americans, are not exclusive of other racial participants. Many players bring friends of other races to participate, and as the men in the interviews point out, are largely recruited for the purposes of fielding the most competitive team. For the first time in my recollection however, a predominantly white church participated at the tournament I observed.<sup>56</sup> While one might assume that having on average, taller and larger players than the other teams would grossly advantage the white church team, they placed third in their pool (of four) and did not win the tournament, having tied for third overall after playoffs. Though I did not hear of any concerns regarding the allowance of the white church's participation, I am curious to see if their allowance might have caused an issue if they had won the tournament. Further, in juxtaposing the literature of black men and sports with Korean American men, by beating this team, it might have confirmed for the Korean American men, that at some level, they belonged with Whites. Moreover for the white church and their fans, their defeat may have begun to disrupt any of the stereotypes they might have had of Asian and Korean American men. Jachinson Chan offers that in the face of stereotypes that

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Donald F. Sabo and Ross Runfola (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 82.

<sup>56</sup> This was due to the opening up of slots when the initial playing date was postponed on account of rain and the originally committed Korean American churches were unavailable to participate on the new date. Furthermore, the postponed date was too close to Easter that many Korean American churches could not participate due to their church responsibilities.



contribute to racial hierarchy, “the burden of proving one’s worth as a [Chinese American] man is bound by the additional burden of disarticulating the stereotypes.”<sup>57</sup> If so, the Korean American men seemed to have held their own.

Another reason why Korean American men may continue to participate in these tournaments despite their violent nature is because it affords men the opportunity to grow close to other men.<sup>58</sup> Numerous hours in practice are spent preparing for a tournament. The idea of “going to battle” with other men and achieving a common goal is another lure.<sup>59</sup> As sport serves as organized opportunity for connection, one scholar argues that boys and men do this fearfully for they are apprehensive of the potential loss of status in their interaction with other boys and men.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, while Carol Gilligan contends that girls and women reason in cooperative and connected ways,<sup>61</sup> men do so through a negotiation of “positional identities.”<sup>62</sup> That is, a man’s identity is formed primarily in separation from and in position to others. Therefore, competition and proving oneself greater than another provides a man self-worth in this exercise of positionality. Because the need for

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<sup>57</sup> Jachinson Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> Messner, *Power at Play*, 32.

<sup>59</sup> On the eve of a previous tournament, the team I was a part of shared a team meal. After the meal, several stayed to watch *300*, the 2006 movie about a Greek army of three hundred soldiers fighting troops of invading Persians, as a way to pump themselves up about going to battle together.

<sup>60</sup> Messner, *Power at Play*, 32-33.

<sup>61</sup> Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*.

<sup>62</sup> Messner, *Power at Play*, 32.

connection is vital for men, sport becomes the safe ground where men are able to feel connected in an arena that legitimizes positioning, posturing, and competitiveness.<sup>63</sup>

Participation in this form of masculinity (i.e., hegemonic masculinity) however can have its detrimental consequences for Korean American men as it does for other men of color.<sup>64</sup> As Korean American men participate non-reflexively in events such as Turkeybowl and Fruit of the Spirit Bowl, they become subject to both the constructive and destructive forces of sport including the perpetuation of violence and patriarchy.<sup>65</sup> Michael Kauffman reminds us that violence is most appropriately seen threefold: violence towards women, towards other men, and towards oneself.<sup>66</sup> As Korean American men find space for self-assertion and prove their manhood through church sports tournaments, they simultaneously reproduce the very dynamics and tools that oppress themselves and others. Self-assertion for many young men often manifests through the guise of "omnipotence through violence."<sup>67</sup> As In Ju Cho has noted, this violence often occurs within Korean American

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<sup>63</sup> Messner, *Power at Play*, 33-34.

<sup>64</sup> Majors, "Cool Pose," 113-14; Runfola, "Black Athlete," 84-85; Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities*, 19-20.

<sup>65</sup> Donald F. Sabo, Philip M. Gray, and Linda A. Moore, "Domestic Violence and Televised Athletic Events: 'It's a Man Thing'," in *Masculinities, Gender Relations, and Sport*, ed. Jim McKay, Michael A. Messner, and Donald F. Sabo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 127-46.

<sup>66</sup> Kaufman, "Construction of Masculinity."

<sup>67</sup> Hatty, *Masculinities*, 6.

households in the form of men's abuse of their spouses.<sup>68</sup> She found in her study that in all categories of violence, seventy-nine percent of the Korean American men had committed some form of spousal abuse from 2006 to 2007. Furthermore, thirteen percent had slammed their wives against the wall and approximately three percent had "hit, held down, or used a weapon to make their wives have oral or anal sex."<sup>69</sup>

### Reshaping the Rules

As I have argued to this point, church sports tournaments produce destructive dynamics that shape in part who Korean American men become. This may appear ironic and puzzling considering that these are tournaments organized on behalf of and played by Christian churches. In some sense, the play these churches demonstrate is nothing different than what some expect in a non-religiously organized tournament. One of the respondents went as far as to say that he felt Korean American men's demonstrations of hypermasculinity were drawn out even more than city leagues because it was a *Christian*

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<sup>68</sup> While Cho does not distinguish between first and second generation Korean American men, the delimitations of her sampling does include men who identify as "Korean or Korean American" and is within the ages of 20 and 64. Furthermore, the questionnaires of the study are conducted in both English and Korean which also leads one to believe there were second-generation Korean American men as part of the constituency. See In Ju Cho, "The Effects of Individual, Family, Social, and Cultural Factors on Spousal Abuse in Korean American Male Adults" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007), (accessed through ProQuest Dissertations, April 12, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 162-63.

tournament. He reasoned that showing aggression was a way to step out of the passive stereotypes of Christians:

Church people want to be seen for [something] other than being passive and being, you know, quiet and being the typical Christians that just are really good Christians....It being church based, sometimes people are more aggressive...than they usually are because of the fact that they don't want to be labeled as soft.<sup>70</sup>

Some may respond that several churches use the tournaments as evangelistic tools to reach out to non-Christians and therefore have a number of players who may not understand a Christian ethos of respect, humility, and care.

Though having a number of non-Christian players present at any one tournament is undoubtedly true, there are two concerns with this reasoning. First, while there are non-Christians who exhibit the violence and the sexism that runs contrary to the ethic of social care expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, there are many *Christian* players who do likewise. Sometimes in competitive sport it is Christians who demonstrate character unbecoming of a Christian. The president of a Christian university, for instance, had the failing grade of a men's basketball team player removed so that the team could improve its chances of winning a national championship.<sup>71</sup> The irony of this episode was that "the president was an ordained minister for whose name the school's graduate divinity school was named, the tournament the team won

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<sup>70</sup> Interview #12.

<sup>71</sup> Shirl James Hoffman, "Whatever Happened to Play?: How Christians Have Succumbed to the Sports Culture and What Might Be Done about It," *Christianity Today*, February 1, 2010, 24.

was the National Christian College Athletic Association, and the failing grade in question had been earned in a religion course.”<sup>72</sup> During the football tournament, I observed one of the players chide a fellow teammate when his girlfriend arrived with team supplies of food and drink. Seeing the many boxes of supplies, player A asked player B if his girlfriend had brought *his* “tampons” as a way to jokingly belittle player B. I raise this example to demonstrate two aspects of sport and Christianity. First, the culture of sport carries with it a sexist and homophobic discourse that helps to differentiate the “real” men (i.e., hegemonic masculinity) from the sissy, girly ones. Second, this type of discourse and ideology appears among Christian men as readily as it does among non-Christian men and is indicative of the influences contemporary sport has among the formation of men in modern society.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, while it would appear next to impossible to differentiate by observation between those who are and are not Christian at these tournaments, it does not deter from the reality that the tournaments are organized by and on behalf of Christian churches. They continue to carry the name “Christian” and have the backing and sometimes leadership of pastors and other spiritual church leaders.

This leads to a second concern of using the tournaments as evangelistic tools. What are non-Christians being evangelized into as they

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<sup>72</sup> Hoffman, “Whatever Happened to Play?”

<sup>73</sup> Both of these men are active members in ministry at the church I observed.

participate in these tournaments? As Shirl Hoffman notes, perhaps Christians, and particularly evangelical Christians, have bought into the larger culture of contemporary sport creating what Frank Deford terms "Sportianity."<sup>74</sup> Here there are no differences between Christian and secular play, for competitive sport regardless the setting, *is* competitive with winners and losers. One may even contend that on account of the *Christus Victor* in addition to the battles fought (and sometimes won) in the Hebrew Bible, high competitiveness and aggressive play help to pave the way for a theological imagination that welcomes this behavior:

Sometimes it's hard on the football field to see who God is because some guy is in your face going boom, boom (making physical hitting motions) and then he throws you on the ground and just walks over you.<sup>75</sup>

Several aspects however reveal that this type of conduct is contrary to participants' and spectators' understandings of Christianity. First, the gathering of all the teams prior to the beginning of play was telling. Like tournaments before, there was a time for all the participants to come together in worship. The director gathered all of the teams around the tournament table<sup>76</sup> and had the players integrate and "stand next to somebody not from your church" because "we are all one in Christ."<sup>77</sup> After quick introductions, the director

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<sup>74</sup> Hoffman, "Whatever Happened to Play?" 23.

<sup>75</sup> Interview #14

<sup>76</sup> This area is a central area marked by a few tables, tournament banner, and the charts of the pool and playoff brackets.

<sup>77</sup> Field notes, March 19, 2011.

continued by exhorting players that we “don’t play for riches here” but store up “treasures in heaven” as a way to encourage the men to “remember who we play for, for God and Christ.” He would continue to add that this type of play is to not “lay out guys.” This message is similar to the other tournaments in which I have participated, as pastors in charge of the message often remind players that they play “for Christ” and “in the spirit of Christ.” Following the message by the director, a couple of young men led the participants in singing two contemporary praise songs. I noticed that while a number of men did not know the words to “Give Us Clean Hands” and “How Great Is Our God,” several men closed their eyes, raised their hands and sang enthusiastically, much like they do in second-generation Korean American worship services<sup>78</sup> and is common among Evangelical worship.<sup>79</sup> At the end of the singing, the director then led us in a time of prayer before play commenced.

A second reason why I believe overt displays of aggression and physical play are contrary to participants’ and organizers’ views of Christianity is that prayer was a key element throughout the day. Teams were encouraged to pray together at the middle of the field before and after every game. While the prayers before the game mostly occurred, those after the games waned as the day went on, the competitiveness increased, the stakes drew higher, and the frustration heightened when a team lost. Moreover, the substance of the

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<sup>78</sup> Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 86-89; Rebecca Kim, *God’s New Whiz Kids?*, 45-46.

<sup>79</sup> Hart, *Old-Time Religion*, 172-200.

prayers players offered is also telling of what their expectations are and what actually occurs at these tournaments. The prayers offered by team captains and pastors prior to the game mirrored those of the tournament directors as they offered petitions to God to help players “play in the spirit of Christ” and “for Christ” in addition to prayers for “protection from injury.” Prayers following games included thanksgiving for “no major injuries,” forgiveness for the attitudes and actions players may have exhibited during the game and the reminder that we are “all brothers in Christ at the end of the day.”

A third significant observation concerning the incongruity of these football tournaments with Christianity is the perspective of the non-participant. While most fans cheered their teams on respectfully, there have been a couple of instances where I witnessed a fan challenging a player to a fight after the game because they were so incensed with the player’s actions. Though this is an anomaly of the actions of most fans, there is something to be said about the views of those who do not regularly attend these tournaments yet know what takes place at these tournaments. The day after the tournament I observed, I had a conversation with a person whose comments sum up well the sentiments others have shared concerning these tournaments. When I told him how his church had finished, he said there needs to be something done for these tournaments to reflect more a “Christian spirit.”<sup>80</sup> When I pressed him a little about what he thought this spirit would look like, he answered that it

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<sup>80</sup> Field notes, March 20, 2011.



wouldn't lead to such "aggressiveness and trying to demolish each other," that players' "attitudes would be better," and there would be less "hyper-aggression."

These three points concerning the compatibility of church football tournaments and Korean American Christianity seem to reveal an implicit assumption shared by most, if not all, who have experienced these tournaments. Participants—whether players, coaches, directors, pastors, or fans—appear to understand that these football tournaments elicit something contrary to their understanding of Christianity. Therefore in addition to the way Christianity is explicitly used to frame the tournament, there are the constant exhortations to play "in the spirit of Christ," "for Christ," and the reminders that we are all "one in Christ."<sup>81</sup>

Though this depiction of what occurs gives an accurate description, it does not tell the whole story. There are those who try to play in a qualitatively different way on account of their commitments to Christian spirituality. Some realize that a contact sport such as football frustrates their ability to live according to their understanding of scripture and Jesus' ethics of love and respect. As a result, some withhold from playing because they know the

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<sup>81</sup> As a comparison, I highlight a softball tournament organized by first-generation Korean Americans in which I participated. The liturgy of worship on the program they handed out at the beginning included the playing of the tournament as *part* of the worship for the day. Contrarily, the second generation appears to have parceled out worship from play, assigning worship *before* play.

violent and aggressive nature that arises within them when they participate.

There are also those however, who knowing the aggression they will confront, continue to play because they want to participate in a more cordial and “Christ-like” way. To hold oneself in this manner includes playing fair (i.e., no cheap shots), helping opponents up when the play is over, giving compliments, interacting with the referees with respect, exemplifying hard play, and viewing their opponent as persons rather than opponents to overcome. One hears this paralleled in Abe’s voice:

For me, I don’t really care about winning that much. As long as I know I had a good game....I think [playing in a different spirit] is something that we should try to do especially when we have an opportunity with non-Christians [who play] sports with us. We could reach out to them and let them see a glimpse of God. It doesn’t have to be God himself because I can’t show you God. I’m not that good but I could show you a little glimpse of him. Maybe that’s going to be a little seed that’s going to be in [his] gut [where he says], “Hey remember that one time that guy picked me up? He didn’t have to pick me up. Why did he pick me up?” Maybe that’ll start something?<sup>82</sup>

Michael responded similarly:

Mark: What would...good Christian play look like to you?

Michael: I think it’s just where people are having fun. Everybody’s having fun and you know it’s not about us against them. So you can play hard but at the same time, if you knock somebody down, help him up. If you see that they’re hurting, ask them if they’re okay. It’s just [having] a general concern for your fellow brother in Christ.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Interview #14

<sup>83</sup> Interview #8

## Conclusion

I present the world of church football tournaments as an example of how Korean American men perform gender.<sup>84</sup> I build on the previous chapters' argument that a more accurate interpretation of Korean American men occurs when viewed through a critical feminist lens of social construction and social power. I assert that when Korean American men find relatively few avenues to exert their sense of self in ways that society deems valid and acceptable, they find other ones to do so. Fruit of the Spirit Bowl, I contend, is one of those possibilities. Through FOTS, Korean American men have the opportunity to perform masculinity, often to the detriment of other Korean American men.

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<sup>84</sup> Another fascinating venue to study is the night club scene, particularly in Koreatown.

## CHAPTER 5

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF KOREAN AMERICAN MEN

#### Introduction

To this point, I have spent considerable attention pulling from several scholarly fields to give us a framework that helps to integrate theory with the qualitative research I conducted. I make the argument that Korean American men are more accurately interpreted as sociohistorical constructs whose use of spirituality helps to reinforce and reinterpret their lived experiences and held ideologies. I do not however advocate for a *strict* sociohistorical reading of Korean American men either; our bodies and physical lives do matter.

On account of this conviction that bodies do matter and a commitment to liberative praxis (critically reflective practice) in my scholarly and professional work, I present this final chapter as an example in praxis-oriented religious education to Korean American men. My purpose in sharing this is to present scholars and practitioners with an example of religious education thought “outside the box” for Korean Americans. My intent is to spur on theological and pastoral imagination among Korean Americans who work with Korean American men and women, not to present a “how to” formula.

I organize the chapter by weaving thick description of the men’s group at Christ Church with theoretical underpinnings of religious education and practical theology. As I recount in detail the genesis and evolution of the men’s

group, I offer reflections on pedagogical issues so religious educators see the matters I had to address in setting up this project. I follow this portion with considerations for future work and research of Korean American men. I offer several issues I observe prevalent among Korean American men and two proposals to address these. These are not conclusive by any means but a constructive offering of potential next steps. I follow this with an initial discussion of the implications for Korean American churches. I end the chapter by providing space for the voices of the men I interviewed as an act of wisdom-giving and a type of rite of passage into adulthood.

### Thick Description of the Men's Group

Four years ago, I started reading Stephen Boyd's *The Men We Long to Be: Beyond Lonely Warriors and Desperate Lovers* searching for resources in men's studies and Christian spirituality. From his introductory chapter, I was struck by the project Boyd set out to accomplish: help men heal from inner and outer destruction in order to live more holistically. He establishes the thesis of his book and work with men upon seven philosophical premises: (1) men are not inherently violent, (2) one can view hegemonic masculinity through a theological frame of sin and a move away from what men are created to be, (3) men participate in an oppressive system that keeps them bound yet calls them to address, (4) communities with new visions of manhood are needed to tend to this transformation, (5) men are interdependent and their well-being is

linked to others, (6) certain aspects of the Christian tradition (theology and practice) have negatively influenced men and society, and (7) the "pursuit of bliss is [men's] duty"—*bliss* understood as true happiness, the result of "wholeness and participation in God's realm of justice and love."<sup>1</sup> Boyd's vision of man seemed to compare with Irenaeus' dictum, "The glory of God is humanity fully alive!"<sup>2</sup> As men live wholly with God and all creation, they live the lives they are meant to live while helping others to do the same. Gustavo Gutierrez's rendering of Job's actions at the end of the biblical narrative is similarly helpful. Job's renunciation of his "lamentation and dejected outlook" is the result of a renewed understanding that God's justice is based not upon retribution but upon gratuity.<sup>3</sup> Because of this generosity, humanity is to live freely unbound by a tit-for-tat mentality. Rather, living "fully" and generously is the reimagining of a whole and dynamic life, one that Susanne Johnson argues gets to the essential character of what humans are meant to be.<sup>4</sup>

I continued my reading intrigued by the men's group Boyd had a hand in creating. Men gathered to listen, encourage, and challenge other men who had grown isolated from significant relationships in spite of their mostly successful pursuits in the public and professional spheres. I got a glimpse of

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<sup>1</sup> Boyd, *Men We Long to Be*, 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> I thank Frank Rogers, Jr. for bringing this saying to my attention.

<sup>3</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 86-87.

<sup>4</sup> Susanne Johnson, "Education in the Image of God," in *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*, ed. Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 127-30.

what could be and consequently, began working with a group of second-generation Korean American men soon thereafter at Christ Church. It began as an internship to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral program in practical theology and religious education, but has continued well past the conclusion of my academic obligations. I hope this longevity is due in part to the significant impact the group has had upon participating members. I began the group initially as a way to explore what goes on in the lives of Korean American men and have since then, come to a clearer picture of why I continue to lead and partake in such an endeavor. It is this: I find in these men and myself a great need for connection, validation, and healing. Often the healing comes through the former two as we listen to one another's stories of struggle and come to awareness (both self and other) while affirming one's journey towards healthy change.

The group initially consisted of six men (including myself), all second-generation Korean American, ranging in age from the early twenties to the mid-thirties. The majority of the men were single never having been married. The group however included one other married man besides me. I had recently become a new father which brought a different set of experiences and which I noticed, raised the level of curiosity among the others as many of the discussions came back to issues regarding the family sphere (i.e., fatherhood and relationships/marriage). Two of the men were fully employed working in successful companies in the private sector. A third was employed part-time at

a law firm while he studied for the bar exam. A fourth worked a part-time job as an audio technician and the fifth worked contractually on corporate leases but was looking for a career change. I was going to school full-time while also working part-time as a high school volleyball coach and an undergraduate adjunct instructor at a nearby university. The men had each been attending the church for at least three years and ranged from being highly involved to moderately involved. One of the men was a small group leader for the church while another, a former leader. The personalities of each were widely different ranging from outgoing, outspoken, and outwardly emotional to quiet, stoic, and soft-spoken.

I self-selected the group based upon several factors. First, I sent out invitations based upon geography after I had an initial discussion with the senior pastor who suggested that I send out notices to men who lived relatively close (within a fifteen minute drive) to the church. He also suggested that I keep the group relatively small (six to eight persons total) so as to make it manageable. I perused the church directory and looked at addresses to initially delineate this group. Second, I further demarcated the invitation list based upon those with whom I already had some exposure. This exposure might have come through playing sports together, participating in the worship band, partaking in a discussion group I had administered earlier in the year at the church, or informally conversing with persons at church. Third, I limited the invitation to those who were out of high school but preferably beyond college



age (one person who participated was of traditional college age). Fourth, because of the highly intimate nature I intended to foster within the group and the pedagogy I planned to implement, I wanted to feel comfortable with those who would join this pilot group. Because of the brevity of duration and the dynamic of open vulnerability, I felt that I needed to work with those with whom I was already comfortable. Finally, as a quasi-ministry, at the request of the senior pastor, I sent out invitations to people who I thought were not as integrated into the life of the church. Considering all of these factors, I aimed for a diversity of men based upon age and life stage. I sent out an initial notice to nine men to solicit any interest in the group. I informed the men that if interested, they would need to commit to every week and if unable, would be precluded from this pilot group. All of the refusals to join were based either upon time conflicts or prior commitments, while several mentioned they would want to join at another time.

Initially, we met once a week for four consecutive weeks. Prior to the first meeting I posed two questions for the men to consider in preparation for our gathering: (1) What does it mean to be a man? and (2) Who told you this? or How did you come to know this? I asked the men to bring clothes to play basketball with the purpose of presenting an alternative pedagogy of Christian and religious education than the ones these men had often grown up with in

their Korean American churches. While Korean American Christian education<sup>5</sup> has largely patterned after an evangelical model based upon bible-centeredness and the passing down of religious tradition largely through transmissive pedagogy, I wanted to try something different.<sup>6</sup> My reasoning for this shift lay in my own observations over the years that the ahistorical and acontextual approach to Christian education many of these men had, resulted in lifeless Christianity, knowing much *about* God and the Christian tradition, but little *of* God and the power behind the tradition. Many could recite the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Sinner's Prayer, the Four Spiritual Laws and tell various stories from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. I observed however that we, Korean Americans, were living far from the abundance Jesus promised to make available (John 10:10). We had learned technicalities and had become automatons to a certain extent. We were persons who had learned well that "Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior" but did not really know what this meant beyond "going to heaven" and being "made clean." Though technicalities and subject matter are important to

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<sup>5</sup> While I understand the historical and theological differences between the two, I use the terms Christian education and religious education interchangeably and not specifically, i.e., religious education broadly. Furthermore, I use these interchangeably because while my degree is officially in "religious education" most of the Korean American churches with the influence of evangelical theology and education, name most of their religious education departments, "Christian education."

<sup>6</sup> Harold W. Burgess, *Models of Religious Education: Theory and Practice in Historical and Contemporary Perspective* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 2001).

religious education, my concern is that Korean Americans have not learned to contextualize well this content in ways that bring greater meaning to their faith commitments and a change in *habitus*. When faced with many life dilemmas and situations that are not directly tackled in scripture, Korean Americans have lacked an ability to theologically and critically reflect in ways that lead to transformed and life-giving practices. In some sense, Korean Americans' theological imaginations are stunted by two closely-related facets: (1) transmissive Christian education and the schooling method of education, and (2) theological method that travels in unilateral direction, from right belief to right action, rather than the practice-theory-practice approaches of practical theology.<sup>7</sup> My pedagogical goal therefore was to create different entry points in order to engage the men in critical dialogue and theological reflection of pertinent issues. We would not stop at dialogue however, but explored new practices we could integrate into our lives on account of our reflection and time spent together.

Though not a religious educator, Paulo Freire speaks about educating for critical consciousness and transformation. Freire applies the term "banking method" to demonstrate how educators versed in a transmissive style of teaching, deposit information into their learners (he calls these learners

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<sup>7</sup> Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 160-67.

“receptacles”) only later to pull out this information when needed.<sup>8</sup> One problem this style of education poses is the learner’s difficulty of internalizing the content. It results in producing learners who know content matter but have yet to grasp the significance behind it in such a way that allows the learner to use it in a multitude of contexts and situations. Freire argues that when this failure occurs, true and full liberation of the learner has not occurred. The learner instead continues to be a prisoner to his or her own learning.

Freire’s response to the banking method of education is summed up in the word *conscientization*—a coming into critical consciousness. The term carries the idea of an awakening to the realities of the self in relation to the world around it.<sup>9</sup> Working with Brazilian peasants concerning their welfare and health conditions, Freire showed them a series of pictures of daily activities and asked them to explain what was occurring in each situation. He proceeded to facilitate a discussion among the people about the structural intricacies and difficulties they faced and helped them draw out reflections on life as a first step towards constructive action.

Though Freire’s theory provides a basis to discuss religiously educative concerns, Anne Streaty Wimberly’s method on story-linking makes an explicit connection to religious and faith matters. Wimberly’s model for Christian

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<sup>8</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th Anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 2003), 71-86.

<sup>9</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 41-58.

education in the African American context includes four phases.<sup>10</sup> First, there is the practice of telling one's life stories. This is a step in self-awareness and critical reflection (conscientization) as one becomes aware of their life realities as they tell their life narratives. Second, there is the step of telling the Christian story in order to link it to one's life story. Third, there is the telling of the stories within one's tradition as a resource for one's growth. For Wimberly, this is the African American tradition rooted particularly in the slave events. Lastly, in light of these first three phases, there is a move towards more well-informed Christian ethics.

In a similar vein, I wanted to offer pedagogy in a manner different from what these men had become accustomed for my goal was to address men's issues and their spirituality through common life practices. We played three-on-three basketball for about an hour during our first gathering. In the midst of playing, it became readily apparent that one of us was severely out of shape and minimally athletically-inclined. No matter how hard this person tried, he would need to take frequent breaks to catch his breath. Furthermore, because of his inability to keep up the pace, his team was put at a distinct disadvantage as his wanting ability made it difficult for them to have any chance of staying competitive. Although everyone who played quietly noticed the difficulty his team had in overcoming this challenge, it did not deter them from having a

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<sup>10</sup> Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 69-91.

good time; winning was not the most important factor this night. Moreover, his team didn't show any noticeable frustration but continued to encourage him to shoot even when it seemed futile.

We eventually made our way off the court to a room where we shared a simple meal. Following the meal, we drew our chairs in a circle and I began to share about my internship and the need for a men's ministry as the reasons for starting this group. I posed the two questions I asked them to earlier consider which led to a discussion of the competitive and posturing manners with which men often play basketball. We observed that when men are beaten on a play, they feel the need to do the same to their opponent on the next play. This conversation led to further discussion of what it means to be a man in society, particularly as an Asian man. Though we discussed this issue only peripherally, we did talk about certain characteristics society values of men: strength, leadership, and not easily shaken. One interesting observation during this discussion was how the men appeared to polarize "society" with "God's will." They desired to carry on God's will while not being swayed by societal expectations of masculinity. I too noticed this occurrence in the interviews as many men distinguished between social and cultural values with God or kingdom values. While there were more musings and questions than definite answers, this discussion of manhood became the first of many conversations that would become a life-giving source for many of us. Some confessed they had reflected little on what makes a man though they offered

that whatever it was, they had mostly learned it from their childhood households or on television.

The primary focus for this first discussion was to have this eclectic group of men start to let down any guards in order to share their thoughts and stories in a non-confrontational and non-correctional setting. My hope was to model conversation that encouraged a listening posture. Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran offer that listening grounded in deep silence enables persons to tend creatively to the world's cries. This listening is not limited only to Holy Scripture but includes the voices of those as close to us as our family and friends.<sup>11</sup> It was important that the dynamic I tried to establish was one of respectful listening and participation and not of correction and rebuke.

The following week we discussed our relationships with our fathers. Again, I posed two questions for them to consider prior to our meeting. First, I asked them to consider a good memory or experience they had of their father. Second, I asked them to think of one of their worst memories or experiences they had of their father. Since this was only our second meeting together it appeared that some of the men were a bit hesitant to divulge personal information, particularly as it related to their families and fathers. As a way to help us enter into this conversation, I prepared a movie—*My Life* (1993) starring Michael Keaton and Nicole Kidman—for the men to watch together.

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<sup>11</sup> Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran, "Educating Persons," in *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning*, ed. Jack L. Seymour (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

Keaton plays the role of a middle-aged man who, in the midst of his wife's (Kidman) first pregnancy, learns that he has a sickness akin to cancer that is quickly deteriorating him to the point of death. After a few trips to Western doctors who cannot cure him, he sees an Asian health specialist who tells him that a "sickness" from his past is the cause of his decline. Keaton and the specialist trace this back to the ruptured relationship with his father Keaton has carried since childhood. Throughout the movie Keaton's character prepares for death by making a home video to leave as a memorabilia for his expected son. In a particularly touching scene at the end of the movie, Keaton's father shaves the face of his son who has become bed-ridden and unable to do so on his own, thus symbolizing a part of the restoration made between the two.

After the movie, we discussed the second question regarding their worst memories or experiences of their fathers. A few did share of the deep hurt caused by the strained relationships with their fathers, a couple coming to tears in the sharing of their fears and disappointments. As most shared about the disappointments they had of their fathers, one shared the difficulty of feeling like he had let down his father. The disappointed look he saw in his father left an indelible mark.

Our discussion then turned to how we respond to disappointment. One resolution we discussed was to focus less on the fear of becoming our fathers for the energy spent not trying to be our fathers functioned for some as a governor. The focus they give in becoming different men than their fathers



shapes the shadows with which they live. As the men shared, the majority of the stories of their fathers revolved around either a distant and emotionally detached figure or an overly attached and hovering one; only one man's father seemed to have any resemblance of balance between these two poles. A few men cried as they narrated stories of feeling rejected or letting their parents down in an environment where they felt like they were never good enough. One man, who barely had any contact with his father after his parents divorced, seemed to have unemotionally accepted this loss as just another matter of life.

The following week we discussed sexuality and spirituality and their interrelatedness.<sup>12</sup> By sexuality, I mean more than physical intercourse or genital activity, though these are part of it. James Nelson's definition of sexuality conveys well the core of the matter. He writes, "Above all, sexuality is the desire for intimacy and communion, both emotionally and physically. It is the physiological and psychological grounding of our capacity to love."<sup>13</sup> One's interpersonal relations present this person the opportunity to intimately

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<sup>12</sup> I was introduced to the acronym S-I-S during my seminary training by my pastoral care professor, Burrell Dinkins. It stands for *Sexuality-Intimacy-Spirituality* and offers the theory that the three are interrelated on account of being created in the likeness of God, that is, as spiritual and relational beings. Dinkins introduced this acronym in a lecture on pastoral counseling, cautioning students, who planned to pastor in a local church, to be aware of the likelihood of sexual attraction and potential misconduct when conducting counseling sessions that are intimate and spiritual in nature.

<sup>13</sup> James B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 26.

commune with others. For some, this intimate knowing is shared through as vulnerable an act as physical sex while for others, it is in the assurance of loyal friendship amidst an admittance of deep difference.

Often a taboo subject in Korean American churches, I find that bringing up the issue of sexuality is initially an awkward topic of discussion. To prepare for this topic, I asked the men to read a passage from Stephen Boyd's work keeping two aspects in mind, our sexuality in relation to women and our becoming "lonely warriors."<sup>14</sup> The passage's main idea contends that men in industrial and technological societies are socialized to climb success-driven ladders, yet leave men with relatively little knowledge of themselves and other significant persons (the lonely warrior). The result is the production of lonely and disconnected men who have a penchant to do violence and harm—especially with one's sexuality—in their pursuit for deeper meaning and intimacy. Violence and harm is the consequence of learning to get what one wants through competition and control as it is learned and exploited in both the public and private spheres.

We began the evening with a discussion of the content and meaning of the assigned reading. This gave way to honest reflections about our sexuality. The conversation focused upon three areas: relations with others, our physical bodies, and our need for intimacy. We delved into traditionally shameful topics for Korean American Christians such as masturbation and pornography and

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<sup>14</sup> Boyd, *Men We Long to Be*, 55-60.

discussed the usual response the Korean American church offers in regards to men's sexuality and men's need to discuss it. The common way the men's home churches responded to such issues was to frame a theological discourse with an emphasis upon guilt, sin, shame, and a dishonoring of God. Within such a context, many of the men were unable to talk about struggles and questions they genuinely held regarding their sexuality leaving them with only their own conscience and self-reflections to navigate through matters. By raising the topic of sexuality in a non-judging environment, the men were able to engage their lives with their faith commitments, which, this integration as I propose in Chapter Three, is a large part of understanding spirituality.<sup>15</sup> We discussed for instance, the issue of power and control as it relates to the pursuit of what these men want sexually and how left unaware, could negatively affect one's life in relation to others.

One dilemma that arose from this topic of sexuality centered on what single men are to do when on the one hand, their hormones have been particularly active since puberty and on the other, they take seriously their churches' teachings to wait for marriage and to not masturbate. Holding these realities in tension, what are men to do with no physical relief in sight? Our

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<sup>15</sup> Maria Harris discusses that the churches educate through three curricula: the explicit, implicit, and null. I was addressing the null curriculum by raising the issue of sexuality in a church context, for if these men were unable to discuss it in the church, they would look for these discussions outside it. See Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 68-69.

discussion did not yield any concrete answers that evening but in exploring these issues together with other Christian men, it appeared to create a breakthrough for some. Many of these men realized that in their sexuality, they were not alone and because of this, the burden upon their shoulders was lightened. Likewise, the married men in our group also shared that even though one has a sexual partner, fulfilling sexual needs and intimacy can be just as unhealthy a process if one's partner becomes solely a sex-act object. From observations of the evening and in follow-up conversations there was a sense of relief and gratitude. The men were comforted knowing that they were not alone with these issues. They now had a group of men with whom they could journey.

The sharing of personal narratives, critical reflection upon these narratives, and the juxtaposition of critically reflected personal narratives with the Christian story, are components of what Thomas Groome calls "shared Christian praxis."<sup>16</sup> Shared Christian praxis is an approach intended to bring reflective action to one's alignment to the Christian story and vision of the kingdom of God. In addition to these basic steps, Groome offers three other considerations: variation and sequence of movements, timing, and the environment.<sup>17</sup> Because Groome does not advocate a method but an approach in shared Christian praxis, he proposes that Christian educators

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 184-206.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 223-27.

adapt the steps according to their context and needs. For instance, he confesses that his first step of dialogue and reflection may not work for groups who have recently come together. One goal in my work with the men is to get them to consider their whole selves (i.e., mind, body, emotions, resources, relationships, work) in light of their spirituality. I took therefore one of their common practices—playing sports—to engage them in a discussion on men, bodies, competitiveness, and spirituality.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, one might ask how I decided the weekly subject matter and its sequencing for the pilot group. Because I had a limited number of weeks, I decided to choose and lead the list of topics. I chose the specific topics because they, from my observations and conversations with Korean American men, appeared to be leading issues and/or issues that had not been broached in Korean American church circles. I sequenced the topics based upon how I thought they would flow from one to the other and more importantly, based upon the timing and building of trust which I believe, allowed us to have a richer discussion about sexuality than if we had it earlier.

While Groome's point on timing is chiefly about duration, I add that timing in terms of appropriateness, is just as, if not more crucial. The

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<sup>18</sup> On account of my previous experiences with this church, I knew that sports play a significant part in the life of this church and in most of these men. Furthermore, I prepared the movie for the conversation on fathers because I knew it could become a "text" through which we could unthreateningly engage a potentially vulnerable topic. Talking about the movie and the characters within, lessened any directness.

appropriateness in an educator's timing is a skill I have witnessed in persons with high emotional quotient regardless their intelligence. There is a word for this in the Korean language: *noonchi*. Noonchi carries with it the idea of considering one's entire surroundings and resources—the environment, emotions, dynamics between people, and social roles—as a way to inform interpretation and appropriate action. It is similar to the high and low contexts linguists and communicators consider in interpersonal dialogue and speech.<sup>19</sup> In the case of these men, I had to be aware of the timing and phrasing of questions and issues that were potentially threatening, particularly to men who had grown up in a shame-based culture. I had to exercise noonchi in order to be a responsible educator and to honor their readiness for certain conversations while also gently moving them forward to ideas they might not have previously considered.

Groome augments the second point on timing with a third reflection on the physical and emotional environments of shared Christian praxis. Here, the educator considers the physical equipment and surroundings to gauge their conduciveness towards the learning endeavor. For our purposes, we met mostly at church, though our final gathering was at a restaurant and then on to a local coffee shop. Although we had planned to have a relaxing evening to celebrate our time together without a discussion topic, an impromptu

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<sup>19</sup> Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating across Cultures* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 100-03.

conversation on finances and stewardship arose sending us back to the church for another two hours after the coffee shop closed! I imagine that because we had tended to the emotional environment—space for trust and safety—organic conversations such as these were appropriate and unsurprising.

### Changes to the Men's Group

A few substantial changes have occurred over the last three years since I first worked with that initial group. I will discuss separately what I observe as the three most significant changes.

#### *Growth and Decline*

First, the pilot group of six has grown to a current number of twelve participants, with its highest count at twenty men last Fall. Part of this growth has been due in part to an open invitation format to which the ministry leaders decided to move. There have been public announcements given at the start of each session for all of the men in the church to join. Furthermore, in preparation for last Fall's session, the leaders of the group decided to recruit men personally who they thought would benefit from such a ministry. On the other hand, there are several possible reasons to explain the decrease in numbers from its height last Fall to its current number. Since there is a high value placed upon weekly attendance, some men's schedules will not allow for this commitment. To these, the leadership team has offered a warm and open

invitation when that person is able to attend once again. A second possible reason why people have not returned is because it has not engaged them to the extent that they have needed. Many come with different needs and expectations, some which are met and others not. Participants and leaders understand that as with all institutions, the men's group—particularly its format of high vulnerability and open sharing—is conducive for some while not for others. A third possible reason is that several of the men have experienced life changes, either work changes that make it difficult for them to drive out to church on a weeknight, or births of their first child and the adjustment period this often takes. A fourth possible reason that is difficult to interpret but must be considered is a person's spiritual tenor. That is, do men withdraw from the ministry because they know it asks something spiritually of them that may call into question their own lifestyle and practices?

### *Change in Leadership*

I had begun the group as the sole leader. One might say that I was *the* authority figure in this group and in this sense, I played the part of an educator in a traditional learning relationship of teacher-learner, authority/giver-learner/receiver. While I do acknowledge that I had the greatest amount of authority and power in this setting (deciding the subject matter, the methods, the invitation list, etc.), my hope was to use this status and authority in a way that helped them come to a place of integrating their lives with their spirituality.



In this sense, I saw my authority and role as both a servant leader and mid-wife.<sup>20</sup>

As we ended this initial group with a time of reflection of the past several weeks, one request that arose by all the men was to continue meeting even after my internship obligations were finished. We started another group in the Spring with two distinct changes. First, we would commit to meeting for eight consecutive weeks (we would call this a *session*). Second, we would take turns leading from week to week. I did this because I wanted the men to share leadership and to help them find their voice among other men in cooperative and not competitive ways. I wanted to give the other men an opportunity to exhibit generosity to the one leading. It also provided a variation of subject matter as each person came up with a topic they wanted to lead. I framed the invitation this way: "Pick a topic you feel most passionate about or one that is on your heart." I asked them to take some time to discern what was going on with their lives and to consider leading a discussion on it. In this manner, I approached the educative aspect with similarities to *kataphatic* spirituality, one that becomes mindful of inner thoughts and images and tends

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<sup>20</sup> There are several helpful resources that address authority in leadership and education. See Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 27-58; Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 30-40; Janet O. Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*, rev. ed. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing, 1994); Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

to these rather than empty oneself of them (*apophatic*). This shift resulted in topic discussions such as relationships, finances, and physical health. In ensuing groups, a sampling of topics included discussions on race, sexuality, leadership, and friendship.

Seeds for mutual leadership and a sharing of power were planted in this second session. The subsequent Fall (year two), we selectively invited other men in our church to participate in the group. Due to scheduling conflicts, some of the initial group of men could not participate this go around. With newcomers, we had a total of nine men, many who would become the future leaders of this ministry. By the next Spring (year two), many of the new participants from the Fall took on primary leadership roles. I had stepped down from leadership and participation due to my own schedule. I believe this shift in leadership was a vital point in the life of the ministry for a couple of reasons. First, it decentralized power and leadership from one figure (me) to a group of four men. Second, it showed that the men who wanted to lead had internalized the value of this group; they had “bought in” to borrow a phrase from the financial world. I did not ask specific people to lead; instead individuals stepped up so the group could continue. The leadership group currently stands at five men who engage in the ministry’s visioning, planning, and sustenance.

*Change in Format*

There have occurred several pedagogical and format changes since the first group, changes that have asked for healthy engagement by the leaders in assessing and evaluating the ministry. One pedagogical change was a move to primarily discussion-based gatherings. I gather that as the meetings moved to shared facilitating, it was easier for men to plan for gatherings based upon dialogue than other teaching methods. Two of the men (one a teacher and the other a computer technician) framed their facilitation through physical activities. To discuss leadership, the teacher had us do a trust walk with blindfolds on and around the church while the computer technician had us exercise to an exercise video for a topic on physical health and spirituality. Besides these two instances, a typical gathering consists of a shared meal (each person takes a turn to bring food for all), a quick checking-in of everybody's week, and then a discussion on the topic.

The leadership group has discerned that for some of the men, they need the weekly format to keep evolving in order for their spirituality to keep growing. They contend that in order to grow in discipleship, they need more substance and teaching in addition to personal reflection. Consequently, the

leaders have created a three-phased ministry which they have called Encounter, Enrich, and Engage.<sup>21</sup> I will comment briefly on these three.

The Encounter group format is based upon the previously-mentioned gatherings. This includes the sharing of personal stories as a way to relate to others. There are two main points this phase sets out to achieve. First, the telling of stories offers the opportunity to bring to light what that person may have held unspoken for so long. Second, there is an explicit goal to create non-judgmental space based upon listening. The men in this phase don't try to "fix" other men; they are there to listen and to explore together the topic at hand. In some sense, there is no curriculum except the individual; his life *is* the subject matter. These groups are limited from six to eight persons, though one group went as high as nine. Men are encouraged to think of themselves and their spiritual growth in relation to the spiritual growth of others. Therefore, their attendance at meetings speaks of their commitment to the group. When men miss, it affects not only their lives, but the lives of others.<sup>22</sup> This guideline was created in part because I observed that one of the issues the men at this church suffer from is isolation and keeping commitment.

The Enrich group's format shifts the focus upon a person-centered pedagogy, to teaching and exploration of text and tradition. This phase looks

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<sup>21</sup> The initial group that focused on spiritual formation and growth is now a full-fledged ministry in the church—one with a budget and representation at the larger ministry council.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendices D and E for the Encounter and Enrich guidelines.

to the texts (Bible), tradition (Christian tradition and theology), and the social sciences or humanities, to inform critical reflection. For instance, to speak about stewardship, I taught a lesson on the image of God to reframe what our daily lives would look like in this manner. I used Daniel Migliore's concept of the image of God as relationship in freedom, coexistence, and dynamism to spur men on to live throughout the week striving for these aspects in their interpersonal relations.<sup>23</sup> The weekly format also changed as the subject matter is now taken in two-week meetings rather than in single weeks.<sup>24</sup> The purpose for modifying the schedule was to give ample attention to the lesson topic in order to make changes in practice and habit. The pedagogical focus of Enrich is more tradition- and text-centered than the person-centered approach in Encounter.<sup>25</sup> In this phase, the curriculum is pre-established and written by several group leaders keeping in mind contextualization as one of the primary goals.

The Engage phase has yet to be implemented though there is purpose for its conception. As a ministry of the church, the leadership felt that it would

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<sup>23</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004), 139-49.

<sup>24</sup> The Enrich format has launched its initial session this Spring. The group is currently in the middle of it.

<sup>25</sup> I learned these terms "tradition-centered" "text-centered" and "person-centered" in a class with Frank Rogers, Jr. as he shared his typology of the various forms of religious education. While there are similar forms in other resources, they are not as comprehensive as Roger's. See Jack L. Seymour, ed. *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

be remiss to end with the second phase where men make life changes but do not step in service with the church community. The Engage phase is meant to turn the previous experiences into outward-reaching service. The leadership group has decided that outward engagement in the church community and the community abroad is the ultimate purpose of the ministry. Telling stories, while important, is only a part of doing life together.

### Future Considerations Working with Korean American Men

The exposure I have had with these men the past three years has afforded me the opportunity to reflect on working with Korean American men. I organize these insights into three sections: (1) Korean American men's issues, (2) future proposals, and (3) implications for Korean American churches.

#### *Korean American Men's Issues*

I noticed several topics of discussion that recurred frequently over the last several years (relationships with women and fathers, and sexuality were the most common). These recurrences made me wonder if there were broader underlying issues behind these discussion topics. That is, were the discussion topics more symptomatic than issue-driven, and if so, what then were the deeper issues? Why did certain topics keep reappearing? Though further research is needed beyond what I have done so far, I will err on the side of conjecture knowing that naming and addressing these issues may help to bring Korean American men and their relationships to further wholeness. As I

have listened and observed many stories, I believe there are enough similarities to surmise a few emerging themes.

*Filial piety*—honoring one's parents through service and sacrifice—adds much weight to Korean American men's shoulders. Several of these men speak of carrying the financial burden of their immigrant parents. Much has been made about the acculturation and socioeconomic assimilation of second-generation Korean Americans; they have gone to elite universities and now command decent salaries. However, on account of this success and Confucian filial piety, emotional stress builds on account of the desire or need to care for one's parents. Furthermore, there are others who have not achieved this educational success or command of salary and yet still feel burdened by their need to care for their parents. As several of the men are jobless or work only part-time, they feel bad for not being able to care for their parents more than they do. This has a double-whammy effect as the care of one's parents is coupled with one's inability to care for oneself. Many of the men understand that their lives are not what they would like it to be or think it should be which often results in a great measure of shame.

Men have shared they feel like they have disappointed their parents. Notice the governor is not their own self-satisfaction but their parents', particularly the fathers'. Several of the men had physically absent fathers while others had emotionally absent ones. One man shared about losing his father early in life to death and then having the expectation placed on him as a

young boy of being the only “man” in the family. Even as a grown man, he is counted on to not only care for his immediate family, but also for his aging mother with duties such as fixing the washing machine when it breaks.

Another man shared that when his father and mother divorced in his early teenage years, he, as the oldest child, was left to care for his siblings and become the “protector” of the family. Other men talked about emotionally absent fathers not because of their lack of physical presence but because of their lack of emotional validation. For some of these men, their fathers were physically present in their lives, perhaps overly present, yet did not connect emotionally with their sons or did so in unhealthy ways. Oftentimes their father’s bearing presence was interpreted by the son as a message to be the best and the most perfect, that nothing less would suffice. Yet some of the men have shared that what they needed most was encouragement and to be seen for who they are and not as they should be, by their fathers.

Another issue for Korean American men is *intimacy*. Though many of the men were in relationships of their own, they did not necessarily exhibit the intimacy they wanted. I found that for many of these men, their inability to communicate their deepest thoughts and feelings prevented them from exposing themselves and drawing close to others. Dan McAdams writes that intimacy is “the desire to share that which is innermost with another person.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Dan McAdams, *Intimacy: The Need to be Close* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 2.



For some men, building intimacy was not solely about communicating one's innermost thoughts. Some needed to work not on verbal communication and sharing, but on reflective listening that did not fix or judge the other.<sup>27</sup> These men were learning intimacy as acceptance and response, not as the process of fixing problems. This type of listening:

...avoids interpreting or judging one another. Rather, it lets one another be. This may involve allowing [oneself] to hear things [one] really [does] not want to hear or acknowledging that [one] understands another's perspective.<sup>28</sup>

Closely related to intimacy is *isolation*. Though several of the men were not lacking the physical presence of others, they were isolated in their emotional connections and consideration for others. This isolation was further driven by a lack of commitment. A few were maverick in spirit, not wanting to be tied down to any commitment. For most however, they lacked vision of a community that would call and empower them to be responsible for the growth of other men.

### *Proposals*

Keeping these issues and needs in mind, I propose two primary steps in working with Korean American men. First, we need to get Korean American

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<sup>27</sup> Lynn C. Miller and John H. Berg, "Selectivity and Urgency in Interpersonal Exchange," in *Communication, Intimacy, and Close Relationships*, ed. Valerie J. Derlega (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), 161-66.

<sup>28</sup> Kathleen M. Galvin, Carma L. Bylund, and Bernard J. Brommel, *Family Communication: Cohesion and Change*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson A and B, 2004), 144.

men to self-process and to think critically about their lives. Critical feminist theory asks that one always be mindful of their social location. As I hope to have made clear by now, Korean American men are sociohistorical beings who feel the pressure to play certain scripts regardless of their cognizance to these scripts. Self-awareness is one of the intended outcomes of self-process and critical reflection. Self-aware men gain a greater understanding of who they are and who they are in relation to others. This is noteworthy for Korean American men given their social perception and status. A second hopeful outcome of self-process and critical reflection is that it helps men name the constructs that often keep them at bay. By naming the structures of one's context, one gains a bit of agency and control over these.<sup>29</sup> Exercised in combination with self-awareness, Korean American men have the opportunity to live more freely and unbound.

The second proposal—initiation—helps the cause of the first. It is important that by this term initiation, I am not looking for a move back to the vision quests of the *mytho-poetic* movements of the 1970s and 1980s or the more recent Promise Keepers movement of the 1990s. I am not suggesting that men need to find their “inner” man or step into their “rightful” place as the head of the family. I am rather proposing that men need to be initiated into themselves and into community. First, by being initiated into themselves, I am

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<sup>29</sup> Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 104-05.

suggesting that we build cultures of validation and actualization. This may take actual rites of passage where men are validated in their *being* rather than in their masculinity, which in North America today, is often a hegemonic masculinity (e.g., male bonding over violent sport). Korean American men need to be validated simply in who they are in their lived experiences. This may come in the form of their work, in their fatherhood, or even in their play. They need to know that they are seen and accepted both in their blemishes and perfections. At the end of one of our sessions, I asked the men when ready, to stand up behind their chairs one-by-one and introduce themselves from the point of view of the person from whom they sought the most validation.<sup>30</sup> The majority of these men shared it from their father's or spouse's point of view and did so with much trouble because of the pain they felt. It is important to note however, that this validation is not a license to live irresponsibly. It is rather a call to live responsibly in relation to others and to pursue their discernment of God's vocation upon their lives. Furthermore, they do not carry a healthy measure of self-worth but of self-criticism.<sup>31</sup> Initiation begins to address the self-criticism and fractured self by helping men to view themselves in a different capacity, one that is affirmed by others who assist the initiation.

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<sup>30</sup> I thank Jon Ito Warden, an Asian American counselor, who shared this technique with a congregation my wife and I had served.

<sup>31</sup> Some men cover this self-criticism up by looking like they have it all together or by acting hard, the "cool pose."

Second, an initiation into community is an invitation into interrelatedness. It is a call for men to realize that they are not isolated from others and that their actions, beliefs, and values have an effect on others. Invitation into community is a challenge to let a man's guard down (to stop the posturing) and to realize that he matters to them and them to him. It asks that men care for oneself in order that they might care for others.

### *Implications for Korean American Churches*

In light of this brief discussion of the issues facing Korean American men and the two proposals I make for persons working with them, I now highlight a few implications specific for Korean American churches. First, Korean American churches and leaders need to train themselves in and implement the use of the social and human sciences in order to understand and interpret their parishioners more fully. The ministry of the church and the Korean American community as a whole would both benefit from the melding of traditional theological curriculum with these two sciences. Training in racial and gender construction and the learning of Asian American immigrant history for instance, would give religious leaders more data to interpret the people whom they serve and want to reach. As life experiences become ever-so-complex, our churches need leaders who are able to discern the underlying structures of people's lives. I have witnessed in several of the churches I have visited, an increased emphasis upon intrapersonal awareness and

psychological concepts (e.g., family of origin) and yet, still lag behind in abilities to discuss macro, systemic issues that concern Korean Americans in the greater society. Though many Asian Americans are carrying out this work in fields and disciplines unrelated to theology, it seems that our ecclesial leaders on the whole, have either turned to these resources minimally or not at all. I believe it is vital for our church leaders to take cross-disciplinary courses in their theological training. If our seminaries do not offer these courses, then the seminarian must have the vision and boldness to request taking these courses elsewhere.

Similarly, a second implication calls for a practical theology approach in our churches. As noted above, a practical theology approach, though it has many variants, is generally characterized as a practice-theory-practice or praxis-theory-praxis methodology. This approach begins with describing the life practices and contexts of persons in order to thoroughly interpret dynamics and occurrences of these practices and contexts. It is at this point that explicit theological reflection and prescription occurs only to result in either affirmed or altered practices. This methodology is much different than the orthodoxy-to-orthopraxy approach. While the practical theology approach can include theological orthodoxy (that is, it does not necessarily exclude church tradition), traditional forms of theological reflection and practice may be prone to overlooking why contemporary practices exist and what to do about them on account of making sure persons have the right belief leading to right action.

The advent of the internet and social media for instance, is a good example of how these two approaches differ in their methodology. Rap battles, the fast-growing internet sensations where two rappers “battle” with one another in a free-style rap contest, gives viewers a taste of not only the creative and artistic flare of Korean American men, but also the great need for self-agency and empowerment. Unfortunately, this creativity is often expressed in destructive and violent manner and coming at the expense of others.<sup>32</sup> While an orthodoxy-to-orthopraxy approach might begin with the command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” therefore resulting in a kinder and more mutually-giving relationship, a practical theology approach begins to uncover why there is even need for Korean American men to posture and tear down other men. It begins to ask if there are other significant reasons for such behavior and then moves to biblical and theological commitments such as loving one’s neighbor as oneself in order to suggest different behavior and practices. I caution that by taking an orthodoxy-to-orthopraxy approach, we miss a vital step in engaging lives at a deep and grounded level.

A final implication in this initial discussion for churches is the need to set up ministries where men have the opportunity to live life together in healthy

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<sup>32</sup> There is an example of a rap battle between two Korean American men with the aliases of “Tantrum” and “Dumbfounded” that captures the dynamic of which I speak. While their ability to free-style in spoken word is admirable and I imagine empowering, it comes at the expense of one another’s humanity. See <http://youtu.be/g8FKVvlttDI> (accessed October 28, 2011).

ways. By this, I am not advocating for a men's night out of sitting together to play poker or to have a night out without the wife and children where one can "just be a man" in the sense of Robert Connell's hegemonic masculinity.

Rather, I am advocating for ministries to be set up where men can share life together in service, reflection, and fellowship. Serving together on projects (e.g., food pantry feedings, Habitat for Humanity experiences) is a good way to help men bond constructively. Establishing small groups where men are given topics to reflect and discuss help to bring self-awareness within and intimacy among one another. Facilitators with good listening skills and the ability to explore deeply an issue are needed. Fellowship opportunities such as camping trips or even poker nights, are further possibilities for doing life together. The main concern of setting up ministries where men do life together is that the men do these activities in ways that have different processes and outcomes than previously practiced. The ministries are calling men to live life differently as a result of understanding their interrelatedness with others.

### Becoming Men: Validation through Wisdom-Giving

As I conclude this dissertation, I share the wisdom of the men who I interviewed for two purposes. First, I want to provide space for the men to give wisdom to those men and boys that will come after them. My hope is that in sharing their words of wisdom here, these men will feel validated in their growth as men and in their becoming of adults. Wisdom-giving is an act

usually relegated from elder (especially men) to younger in traditional Korean American culture. Therefore, this is my minimal attempt at validating these men, if not altogether creating a rite of passage. Though one can critique the content, I let these speak without critical analysis as a ritual act of becoming. Second, as a researcher who has named the men I interviewed research *partners*, I feel it is appropriate to give them an opportunity to assist in concluding this project.<sup>33</sup> I have categorized their responses in three broad strokes: process and openness, caution and resistance, and Godly shaping.

First, several of the men offered that being a man is a fluid process and a journey of learning to define oneself in the midst of a society that will do it for them. For some, this means being open to others' wisdom and learning. Eric, for instance, encourages each man to see their "self-concept as fluid" and to invite and enjoy other's "hammering and molding" as a way to view oneself as moldable "clay."<sup>34</sup> Ken echoes something similar as he offers that being a man is about "discovery" and not something you are "born with necessarily."<sup>35</sup> He shares that development and growth are keys to becoming a man as is surrounding oneself with other men one can emulate. Chris and Abe reinforce this idea of being open to other's shaping. While Chris begins with the suggestion to "really be yourself" and to be "truly sure of yourself," he also

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<sup>33</sup> At the end of each interview, I posed the question, "What would you want to say to the boys or men who are to come behind you about what it means to be a man or masculine?"

<sup>34</sup> Interview #1

<sup>35</sup> Interview #4



urges that one should “be open to correction” and “people trying to make you better.”<sup>36</sup> Abe acknowledges that being a man is “not easy” and offers to men and boys that the struggle and ambiguity of what it means to be a man is “normal.”<sup>37</sup> He would continue to advise that finding both a mentor and a group of men with whom to share, helps to address a man’s tendencies to rather live alone than in relation to others. Paul offers a slightly different answer, using self-awareness as the key to answering the question. For him, the journey of becoming a man is a process of naming the various influences a person is under, while also discerning which of these influences are good and healthy:

I feel like the most important thing is figuring out what’s influencing you, how it’s influencing you, and determining what are the best influences for you because ultimately...your identity [is] going to be healthiest when it’s coming from sources that you can trust and understand where they’re coming from.<sup>38</sup>

While a second category of responses also exhibits an open stance to the shaping of others, these responses take somewhat of a more resistive posture, particularly in light of social and cultural influences. One might say these men refuse to give in to destructive and confining racial and cultural scripts. Ryan counsels to not “let anyone tell you or define for you what it means to be a man,” but to “define it for yourself” especially in the face of “society and culture” defining “what manhood is for you.”<sup>39</sup> He goes on to say

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<sup>36</sup> Interview #11

<sup>37</sup> Interview #14

<sup>38</sup> Interview #5

<sup>39</sup> Interview #2

however, to “explore [what it means to be a man]” and to “take people’s advice.” Isaiah’s counsel is more forthright, warning against the power of society to sway one’s vision of manhood. “Don’t let society, don’t let the media and society trick you into thinking what manhood is...As you come into your own, you’ll have your own definition of manhood and that if you stick by your beliefs...your definition will be just as good as anyone else’s.”<sup>40</sup> Jimmy’s focus on self-definition is notable, urging men and boys to “stand up for what you believe is right” and to “be proud of who you are” or “your work.”<sup>41</sup> Tony resists the sociocultural normative ideal of the hegemonic male by directing men and boys to not be “afraid to show humility” and to not always feel like one has to prove oneself, particularly through aggression. While “a lot of people want to be the bad boy and...want a lot of people to be afraid of them,” he offers that one doesn’t have to “go for that” but can demonstrate respect for others.<sup>42</sup>

The last set of responses is best categorized under the broad understanding of Godly shaping. Since these men are all Christians, theological and biblical influences play a large role in their formation as persons. While not all partners mention explicitly the role of God and spirituality in their lives, there are several who did. I further divide these responses into two subcategories. First, there are those who respond by claiming acceptance and an identity in God; God’s love, acceptance, and

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<sup>40</sup> Interview #7

<sup>41</sup> Interview #10

<sup>42</sup> Interview #12

guidance are enough in sustaining and shaping men. John hearkens to the first chapter of Genesis sharing that “we reflect God’s image [and are] valued in God’s eyes and [have] a place in society even though it might not seem so.”<sup>43</sup> Rodney encourages men and boys to find one’s value neither in what the world says about them, nor in what their accomplishments are, but in securing one’s “identity in God.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Charles offers an exhortation of love and acceptance, and a posture open to God. “I want them to know, ‘I just love you and you are loved.’ You don’t need to go out and do things to prove yourself. You can be okay just being yourself....Be humble and always depending on God.”<sup>45</sup> A second subcategory consists of the results of a life shaped by God. Michael’s response offers that sticking to “God’s word...its principles and its teachings,” helps to bring about “a good life.”<sup>46</sup> Brian and Peter share in their concern for outward movement. That is, as God’s plan for boys and men unfolds, they should eventually move towards compassion and engagement with others. Brian offers that going “all out for God” should entail having “compassion for people” and “not being self-centered” but “other-centered.”<sup>47</sup> Peter counsels that one is able to see God more clearly as he branches out of his racial boundaries and learns to listen more than to speak:

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<sup>43</sup> Interview #3

<sup>44</sup> Interview #15

<sup>45</sup> Interview #13

<sup>46</sup> Interview #8

<sup>47</sup> Interview #6

Get to know people outside of the kimchi mix. Get to know a black man. Get to know a Mexican man. Get to know a Filipino man. Get to know a German. Get to know a Norwegian man....So have wide eyes and ears and soak in the world and in the context of that, you'll see God a lot more clearly.<sup>48</sup>

The words of wisdom offered by these men to the generations who are to come, begin to speak to the idea that second-generation Korean American men are on their way to becoming healed and integrated persons. The hope is that as we study and engage a specific group of Korean Americans, the whole Korean American community may be restored and in doing so, have the ability to interact boldly and generously with other cultural, social, and racial communities.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview #9

## APPENDIX A

### Informed Congregational Consent<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

My name is Mark Hearn and I am a student at Claremont School of Theology conducting an ethnographic study for my dissertation entitled, "Men and Spirituality: A Study on Gender and Spirituality among Second-Generation Korean Americans." My e-mail address is mark.hearn@cst.edu. My dissertation adviser is Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook and her e-mail address is skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu. You may contact either of us if you have questions about this study.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study second-generation Korean American men and their spirituality. I am trying to learn more about second-generation Korean American men and how they understand masculinity in light of their daily lives in contexts such as work, family, church and recreation. Furthermore, I am exploring their understandings and practices of Christian spirituality and how, if at all, they see their lives affecting their spirituality and the inverse, how their spirituality affects their lives as men.

#### Permission and Procedure

I, as the conductor of the research, am asking for permission to observe and study the congregation you lead. By consenting to this agreement, I will conduct participant observation with your congregation, specifically exploring its worship services, bible studies, small groups, and other ministries, in order to gain an understanding of the second-generation Korean American men there. While the observations will inevitably include persons of different gender and race, I will focus my observations primarily on the men. I will take field notes and use these as empirical data for the ethnography. Furthermore, I may ask you to clarify questions that may arise on account of the observations.

#### Duration of Observations

The duration of the participant observation will begin January 30, 2011 and continue for three months ending April 30, 2011. I will also conduct personal interviews with second-generation Korean American men in your church. I will first choose from the men involved with the Men's Ministry, and then

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008): 96-97. Used by permission.

supplement those numbers with other men involved in the congregation. My goal is to interview 15-20 men.

### **Voluntary Consent**

Your consent to involve your congregation is completely voluntary. If you authorize your congregation for this study, you may withdraw your congregation from this study at any time.

### **Risks**

There are no known risks associated with this participant observation. However, if you feel uncomfortable in the course of the observations, please inform me promptly.

### **Benefits**

While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that these observations will give you data on the practices of your congregation and the men of your church. Specifically, this study is intended to benefit second-generation Korean American men in providing a partial depiction of what it means to be a Korean American man in contemporary U.S. society and Christianity. Generally, it is intended to benefit the larger Korean American community and North American Christianity as it sheds light on a population that has been under-researched.

### **Anonymity**

The name of your congregation will be kept anonymous in all of the reporting and/or writing related to this study. I will be the only person conducting the participant observation, the interviews, and the only person who will look at the field notes and listen to the audio recording of the interviews. When I write the ethnography, I will use pseudonyms for your church, and all interview participants, unless you specify in writing that you wish your congregation to be identified by name. If you wish to choose a pseudonym for your church, please indicate the name you would like me to use here:

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### **Sharing the Results**

I plan to construct an ethnography—a written account of what I learn—based on the participant observation, personal interviews, pertinent literature and research. In addition to my dissertation adviser, this ethnography will be submitted to the rest of my dissertation committee (Frank Rogers, Jr., David K. Yoo) as part of my fulfillment for the doctoral program in Practical Theology at CST. I also plan to share this ethnography with consenting participants (including you) and will make portions of the dissertation available to them.

**Publication and Presentations**

There is the possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future (e.g., academic journal article, book) and present on the findings in academic conferences and church seminars. In this event, I will continue to use pseudonyms and may alter identifying details in order to further protect your congregation's anonymity.

**Before you sign**

By signing below, you are agreeing to allow me access to your congregation for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to this authorization, a copy of this document will be given to you.

**Pastor's signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Interview Consent<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

My name is Mark Hearn, and I am a student at Claremont School of Theology conducting a qualitative study (ethnography, interviews, literature research) for my dissertation entitled, "Men and Spirituality: A Study on Gender and Spirituality among Second-Generation Korean Americans." My e-mail address is mark.hearn@cst.edu. My dissertation adviser is Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook and her e-mail address is skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu. You may contact either of us if you have questions about this study.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study second-generation Korean American men and their spirituality. I am trying to learn more about second-generation Korean American men and how they understand masculinity in light of their daily lives in contexts such as work, family, church and recreation. Furthermore, I am exploring their understandings and practices of Christian spirituality and how they see their lives affecting their spirituality and the inverse, how their spirituality affects their lives as men.

#### Procedure

If you consent, as a *research partner* (you will be referred as this hereafter), you will be asked several questions in an oral interview that will take place in a location to be determined that will be convenient to you, conducive to hearing, and provide privacy. I will make an audio recording of the interview to be later transcribed. After the study and dissertation are completed, I will erase the audio recording.

#### Time Required

The interview will take approximately one hour of your time. Follow-up conversations may be needed to help clarify information.

#### Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008): 96-97. Used by permission.



### **Risks**

There are no known risks associated with this interview. However, it is possible that you might feel distress in the course of the conversation. If this happens, please inform me promptly.

### **Benefits**

While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your experiences or that you will find the conversation meaningful. Specifically, this study is intended to benefit second-generation Korean American men in providing a partial depiction of what it means to be a Korean American man in contemporary U.S. society and Christianity. Generally, it is intended to benefit the larger Korean American community and North American Christianity as it sheds light on a population that has been under-researched.

### **Anonymity**

Your name will be kept anonymous in all of the reporting and/or writing related to this study. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the tapes. When I write the report, I will use pseudonyms for all research partners, unless you specify in writing that you wish to be identified by name.

If you wish to choose your own pseudonym for the study, please indicate the name you would like me to use for you here: \_\_\_\_\_  
(First and Last).

### **Sharing the Results**

I plan to write a report based on these interviews, observations of a Korean American second-generation church, and pertinent literature from various disciplines. In addition to my adviser, the dissertation will be submitted to the rest of my dissertation committee (Frank Rogers, Jr., David K. Yoo) as part of my fulfillment for the program in Practical Theology at CST. When completed, I also plan to make available the dissertation to consenting research partners.

### **Publication and Presentations**

There is the possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future (e.g., academic journal article, book) and present on the findings in academic conferences and church seminars. In this event, I will continue to use pseudonyms and I may alter some identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

### **Before you sign**

By signing below, you are agreeing to an audio-recorded interview for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to

your satisfaction. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you.

**Research Partner's signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

**Sports Tournament Informed Consent<sup>1</sup>****Introduction**

My name is Mark Hearn and I am a student at Claremont School of Theology conducting an ethnographic study for my dissertation entitled, "Men and Spirituality: A Study on Gender and Spirituality among Second-Generation Korean Americans." My e-mail address is mark.hearn@cst.edu. My dissertation adviser is Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook and her e-mail address is skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu. You may contact either of us if you have questions about this study.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to study second-generation Korean American men and their spirituality. I am trying to learn more about second-generation Korean American men and how they understand masculinity in light of their daily lives in contexts such as work, family, church and recreation. Furthermore, I am exploring their understandings and practices of Christian spirituality and how, if at all, they see their lives affecting their spirituality and the inverse, how their spirituality affects their lives as men.

**Permission and Procedure**

I, as the conductor of the research, am asking for permission to observe and study the tournament you lead. By consenting to this agreement, I will conduct participant observation at the Fruit of the Spirit tournament, specifically exploring how the Korean American men there express themselves throughout the day and how, if any, their spirituality affects this. I will take field notes and use these as empirical data for the ethnography. Furthermore, I may ask you to clarify questions that might arise on account of the observations.

**Duration of Observations**

The duration of the participant observation will be for that day, March 19, 2011. I will be participating in the tournament with my own team so much of my observation will take place outside of my own play, though it will include observations of my own team playing (I will write notes of my own team and have already been studying them for this study). I will not formally interview anyone at the site, but will listen for conversations and use informal conversations as data.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008): 96-97. Used by permission.

### **Voluntary Consent**

Your consent to involve this tournament is completely voluntary. If you authorize this tournament for this study, you may withdraw your agreement from this study at any time.

### **Risks**

There are no known risks associated with this participant observation. However, if you feel uncomfortable in the course of the observations, please inform me promptly.

### **Benefits**

While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that these observations will give you data on the practices of your directed tournament and the men representing each of these churches. Specifically, this study is intended to benefit second-generation Korean American men in providing a partial depiction of what it means to be a Korean American man in contemporary U.S. society and Christianity. Generally, it is intended to benefit the larger Korean American community and North American Christianity as it sheds light on a population that has been under-researched.

### **Anonymity**

The name of the tournament will be kept anonymous in all of the reporting and writing related to this study. I will be the only person conducting the participant observation. I will be the one to write the ethnography and if need be, will only consult with others on data analysis after having removed all identifiers. When I write the ethnography, I will use pseudonyms for this tournament, unless you specify in writing that you wish this tournament to be identified by name. If you wish to choose a pseudonym for the tournament, please indicate the name you would like me to use here:

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### **Sharing the Results**

I plan to write a report based on this observation that will assist the writing of my dissertation. In addition to my adviser, the dissertation will be submitted to the rest of my dissertation committee (Frank Rogers, Jr., David K. Yoo) as part of my fulfillment for the program in Practical Theology at CST. When completed, I also plan to make available the dissertation to consenting research partners.

### **Publication and Presentations**

There is the possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future (e.g., academic journal article, book) and present on the findings in academic conferences and church seminars. In this event, I will

continue to use pseudonyms and may alter identifying details in order to further protect this tournament and participants' anonymity.

**Before you sign**

By signing below, you are agreeing to allow me access to the Fruit of the Spirit Tournament for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to this authorization, a copy of this document will be given to you.

**Director's signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### Men's Ministry ENCOUNTER Guidelines

As we launch Men's Ministry, we look forward to the potential relationships we will nurture and the exploration of our spirituality in all areas of our lives. We exist because we acknowledge certain issues that generally keep men from living full and abundant lives, one being isolation and the vacuum it creates of deep, meaningful relationships. Our purpose then is to create opportunities where men can come and explore their lives in faith within a community. Our theme verse is John 10:10, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (NKJV).

In order for our time to be fruitful, let us consider a few items:

- You are committing not only to personal growth, but to the group and to each other
- Your attendance is vital to the life of the group and excessive absences will be seen as an inability or an unwillingness to be part of the group to the extent the others need you to be
- No topic of discussion, no area of our lives are "off-limits"; we want our spirituality to grow in every aspect of our lives
- Trust and confidentiality are of prime importance if not the most importance. What is spoken among the group stays among the group unless there is consent to share with others
- Vulnerability often builds trust; trust helps with people sharing. Though our stance is not to push persons to share until they are comfortable, we ask that persons take "faith" leaps of vulnerability, trusting in the confidence, respect and care of others. If the facilitator discerns that some share more than others, he might encourage some to speak up while encouraging others to speak less. This should also be a good opportunity to self-monitor
- We may not always agree with one another. If you find yourself disagreeing with someone else and feel yourself getting emotional and/or upset, take a breath and ask the question, "Could you say more?" rather than take an accusatory approach that puts people on the defensive

- Members of the group will be asked to facilitate different meetings throughout the 8-10 week session. This helps persons engage and connect with something that is personal while it also helps men to grow in their ability to lead
- We don't use any *published* curriculum (e.g., it is not a Navigator's Study) though there is a curriculum. This is each of our lives and what we bring to the group week in and week out. It also consists of bringing resources such as various Bible stories, sayings, the Christian tradition, readings and our reason in order to reflect upon what God is doing to shape our lives to live more lovingly and abundantly
- Our time is not meant to merely gather together and talk about what's going on in our lives (it is not simply a sharing group). It includes this but is rather meant to be more than this. It is to be intentional about developing our spirituality in every life circumstance.

## APPENDIX E

### Men's Ministry ENRICH Guidelines

The Enrich phase builds upon the foundations set in the Encounter group. In Encounter, we share personal and vulnerable aspects of our lives in confidentiality and trust for two primary reasons. First, it is to build intimacy with others, learning to place our lives into the hands of a community of brothers acting as the presence of God. Second, we uncover our lives—the deepest parts of my life that only I know of—in order to move from life-thwarting to life-giving practices and postures. The Encounter group is an exercise in “coming clean” before God and others in order to position ourselves in a way that can be formed towards life transformation.

The Enrich group takes these principles to a deeper level. It continues to integrate daily living with personal sharing, but it also looks to incorporate other resources (outside of our own personal stories and reflections) to help us live abundantly. The Enrich phase asks us to consider our experiences with scripture, reason, and other Christian voices. This phase holds us accountable to deepening our personal spiritual growth and our love and need for the body of Christ. To set us on this path, we need to keep in mind the following guidelines:

#### From Encounter

- Confidentiality—Our growth together works in part because we feel safe enough to share. What is said in the group stays in the group unless you have permission to share with others. Ask the person if you need permission. If unsure, let us err on the side of confidentiality.
- Attendance—You are committing to the group and its spiritual growth, not only to your own personal growth. Therefore, your attendance is vital to the group process. When you miss, it affects the rest of the group and most likely, your own life. We should matter to one another. Therefore, make it a priority to come to each meeting. There is grace and understanding for misses, but let us make it a habit and decision to attend each meeting.
- Respect and Tolerance—We will not agree on everything. This is a gift as our differences offer us opportunities to realize God's largeness. Therefore, let us respect other's views. Part of the practice of meeting together is to learn to hear in love and not quick judgment, while also to learn to engage in mutual conversation with the purpose of exploration and growth. We can learn from people with whom we disagree.



- Affirmation and Acceptance—We will strive to love you no matter what you do. This will become fruitful when we trust that you will strive for the same with us. We are making covenant with one another.

#### New Guidelines

- Commitment—Beyond attendance, we ask that you commit to living your life in ways that will make yourself available to God's working. This includes doing the assignments during the week (commission), but might also include withholding from other practices (omission).
- Wholism—Our lives are meant to be lived beyond ourselves. In order for this to happen, we have to do necessary interior work in order to produce good, outer fruit. God gives grace in order that our inner and outer lives become integrated. That is, our inner and outer lives are consistent.
- Openness—Make yourself available to God. This may mean that you need more discipline in your life. It may mean that you listen to the wisdom of others. It might mean you pay careful attention to the deep well within your soul. It might mean that you ask yourself the question, "Could my ideas about God be wrong? Maybe they're too small?" Rather than want the group to confirm your understanding of God and faith, be open to the possibility that God might want you to draw nearer to truth through ways you may never have imagined.

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